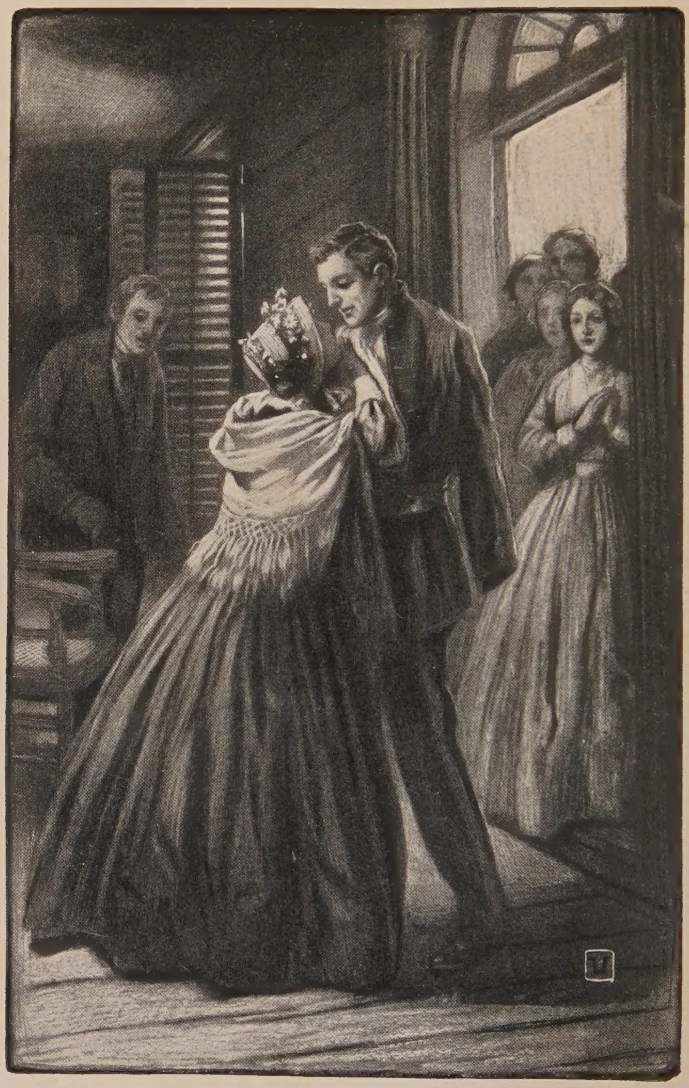

"'TAKE CARE, MOTHER!' HE SAID. 'MY ARM—'"

Author's Definitive Edition

IN WAR TIME

BY

S. WEIR MITCHELL, M.D.
LL.D. HARVARD AND EDINBURGH

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IN WAR TIME.

I.

In the latter part of the afternoon of a summer day in the year 1863, a little crowd gathered near the door of the military hospital on Filbert Street, in the city of Philadelphia. Like the rest of the vast camps of the sick, which added in those days to the city population some twenty-five thousand of the maimed and ill, this one has been lost, in the healing changes with which civilizing progress, no less quickly than forgiving nature, is apt to cover the traces of war.

The incident which drew to the hospital gate a small crowd was common in those days. Ambulances were bringing to its portal a share of such wounded men as were fit to be removed to a distance from Gettysburg and distributed among the great hospitals of the North. A surgeon in green sash and undress army uniform stood bareheaded within the shade of the doorway. Beside the curbstone, near the ambulances, a younger man, an assistant surgeon, directed the attendants, as they bore the wounded into the building on stretchers between double lines of soldiers of the invalid

corps, who at that time did guard duty in our hospitals.

The surgeon at the doorway, a tall, refined-looking man, so erect as to seem a little stiff in figure, made occasional comments in a quiet, well-bred voice, rather monotonously free from the decisive sharpness which habits of command are apt to produce.

"Break step, my men. Break step — you shake the stretcher! Break step — make more room there, sergeant. Keep back the crowd."

Sometimes, a man got out of the ambulance with help, and limped eagerly into the open doorway; sometimes, lost to all around him, one was borne in motionless; sometimes, it was a face to which death had already whispered, "Come." In the little hall the bearers paused, while a young surgeon asked a few brief questions, after which the sick man was given his iced lemonade, or some other refreshing drink, and taken away.

Now and then an officer was carried in. This was usually some desperately wounded man, unable to be taken to his home. As these sufferers passed the surgeon in charge, he noted the scrap of uniform, or the cap, and drawing himself up saluted with excessive military accuracy. Were the man too ill or too careless to notice this courtesy, a faint lift of the surgeon's brow, some slight treachery of the features, showed that he, at least, felt that nothing less than paralysis would have prevented him from returning the military salutation.

Meanwhile, about two squares away, as Philadelphians say, a man and woman were walking somewhat rapidly toward the hospital. The man was what is known in the army as a "contract-assistant surgeon," that is, a physician taken from civil life and paid at a certain rate per month to do the duty of a military surgeon. In some cases these gentlemen lived in the hospitals, and were of course expected to wear uniform, and to submit to all the usual rules of military life. Others merely attended at set hours, and included not only certain of the most able men in the profession of medicine, but also a great number of the more or less competent, glad enough of the eighty dollars a month which they received. Among these latter were many of those hapless persons who drift through life, and seize, as they are carried along, such morsels of good luck as the great tides of fortune float within reach of their feeble tentacula. This contract surgeon was a man of full middle height. He stooped slightly, but the habit became oddly noticeable owing to his uniform, on which the surgeon in charge insisted during the time of the hospital visit. He wore a military cap, under which his hair curled softly. His features were distinct but delicate, and the upper lip, which was short, retreated a little, a peculiarity apt to give to the countenance a certain purity of expression. His face was clean shaved, but he had better have worn a mustache, since the mouth was too regular for manly beauty. As he went by, two sun-browned young fellows in

uniform, and wearing their corps marks, turned and glanced at him. One of them said, "What an interesting face!" The other returned, smiling, "But what a careless figure! and a soldier with a sun umbrella is rather droll." In fact, there was a certain look of indifference to appearances about the man's whole aspect, and the umbrella which had excited remark was carried at a lazy slope over the shoulder. Evidently, he felt very keenly the damp, oppressive heat of the July day; but while this was seen in the indolent slowness of his walk, his face showed plainly that the mind was more alive than the body. As they crossed the small park then known as Penn Square, he paused to pick up a flower, counted its stamina, and stowed it away in the lining of his cap. An insect on his sister's sleeve drew his attention. The trees, the passers-by, a monkey and a hand-organ at a street corner, all seemed to get in turn a share of alert, attentive regard.

The woman beside him was a strange contrast. Unmindful of anything about her, she walked on steadily with a firm, elastic step, and a face which, however pleasing, — and it was distinctly that, — was not remarkable for decided expression. Whatever might have been her fortunes, time as yet had failed to leave upon her face any strong lines of characterization. Absolute health offers a certain resistance to these grim chiselings of face; and in this woman ruddy cheeks, clear eyes, and round facial lines above a plump but well-built and com

pact frame told of a rarely wholesome life. She was dressed in gray linen, fitting her well, but without cuffs, collar, or ribbon; and although the neatness of her guise showed that it must have exacted some care, it was absolutely devoid of ornament. In her hand she carried a rather heavy basket, which now and then she shifted from one side to the other, for relief.

Presently they turned into Filbert Street from Broad Street.

"Do look, Ann!" said Dr. Wendell to his sister. "I never pass this paper mulberry-tree without a sense of disgust. There is a reptilian vileness of texture and color about the trunk; and don't you remember how, when we were children, we used to try to find two leaves alike? Don't you think, Ann, there is something exasperating about that? I was trying to think why it annoyed me now. It is such a contradiction to the tendency of nature toward monotonous repetition."

"You had best be trying to hurry up a little," returned Miss Wendell.

"Do give me that basket, dear," said her companion, pausing; "it is much too heavy for you. I should have carried it myself."

"It is not heavy," she said, smiling, "and I am very well used to it. But I do think, brother Ezra, we must hurry. Why cannot you hurry! You are half an hour late now, and do look at your vest! It is buttoned all crooked, and — Why, there is quite a crowd at the hospital door! Oh,

why were you so late! and they do fuss so when you are late."

"I see, I see," he said. "What can it be? I wish it was n't so hot. Do hurry, Ann!"

The woman smiled faintly. "Yes, it is warm. Here, take this basket. I am tired out." Upon which, somewhat reluctantly lowering his umbrella, he took the basket, and quickened his pace. A large man, solidly built, drove by in a victoria, with servants on the box, himself in cool white. Dr. Wendell glanced at him as he passed, and thought, "That looks like the incarnation of success!" and wondered vaguely what lucky fates had been that man's easy ladders. Very successful men and people who have had many defeats both get to be superstitious believers in blind fortune, while a certain amount of misfortune destroys in some all the germs of success. For others, a failure is like a blow. It may stagger, but it excites to forceful action.

"Come!" said his sister, looking as worried and flushed as if she, and not he, had been to blame; and in a minute or two they were entering the hospital.

"Good-evening, Miss Wendell," said the surgeon; "excuse me — don't stand in the way. A moment, Dr. Wendell, — a moment," he added, saluting him; and glancing, with a gentleman's instinct, after Miss Wendell, to be sure she was out of hearing. Then turning, he said to his subordinate, "You are a full half hour late; in fact,"

taking out his watch, "the clock misled me, — you are thirty-nine minutes late. Sergeant, don't let me see that clock wrong again. It should be set every morning."

Wendell flushed. Like most men who think over-well of themselves, he was sensitive to all reproof, and the training of civil life, while it had made more or less of hardship easy to bear, had unfitted him for the precision which that army surgeon exacted alike from his juniors and his clocks.

"I was somewhat delayed," said Wendell.

"Ah? No matter about excuses. You, we all of us, are portions of a machine. I never excuse myself to myself, or to others. Yes — yes — I know" — as Wendell began again to explain. At this moment the soldiers set down at his feet a stretcher just removed from an ambulance, while another set of bearers took their places.

The surgeon saluted the new-comer on his little palliasse, noting that around him lay a faded coat of Confederate gray, with a captain's stripes on the shoulders. The wounded man returned the salute with his left arm.

"You were hurt at Gettysburg?" said the surgeon.

"Yes, sir. On Cemetery Hill; and a damned hard fight, too! We were most all left there. I shall never see a better fight if I go to heaven!"

The attendants laughed, but the surgeon's face rested unmoved.

"I hope you will soon be well." Then he added

kindly, "Dr. Wendell, see that this gentleman is put in Ward Two, near a window, and give him some milk punch at once; he looks pale. No lemonade; milk punch. Come now, my men; move along! Who next? Ah, Major Morton, I have been expecting you!" and he bent to shake hands warmly with a sallow man who filled the next stretcher. "I am sorry and glad to see you here. I got your dispatch early to-day. Gettysburg, too, I suppose?"

"Yes, Cemetery Hill. I wonder the old Fifth has any one alive!"

"Well, well," replied the surgeon, "we shall give you a health brevet soon. Bed Number Five, next to the last man. Take good care of Major Morton, Dr. Wendell. He is an old friend of mine. There, easy, my men! I will presently see to you myself, Morton."

And so the long list of sick and hurt were carried in, one by one, a small share of the awful harvest of Gettysburg, until, as night fell, the surgeon turned and entered the hospital, the sentinel resumed his place at the open door, and the crowd of curious scattered and passed away.

Meanwhile, Dr. Wendell went moodily up-stairs to the vast ward which occupied all the second floor of the old brick armory. He was one of those unhappy people who are made sore for days by petty annoyances; nor did the possession of considerable intelligence and much imagination help him. In fact, these qualities served only, as is usual in

such natures, to afford him a more ample fund of self-torment. In measuring himself with others, he saw that in acquisitions and mind he was their superior, and he was constantly puzzled to know why he failed where they succeeded.

The vast hall which he entered was filled with long rows of iron bedsteads, each with its little label for the owner's name, rank, disease, and treatment suspended from the iron cross-bar above the head of the sufferer. Beside each bed stood a small wooden table, with one or two bottles and perhaps a book or two upon it. The walls were whitewashed, the floor was scrupulously clean, and an air of extreme and even accurate neatness pervaded the place. Except for the step of a nurse, or occasional words between patients near to one another, or the flutter of the fans which some of them were using to cool themselves in the excessive heat, there was but little noise.

Dr. Wendell followed the litters and saw the two officers, gray coat and blue coat, placed comfortably in adjoining beds.

"Are you all right?" said Wendell to the Confederate.

"Oh, yes, doctor! I 've had too hard a time to growl. This is like heaven; it 's immensely like heaven!"

Miss Wendell had followed them, after distributing here and there some of the contents of her basket.

"Stop," she said to her brother; "let them lift

him. There," she added with a satisfied air, as she shook up and replaced the pillow, — "there, that is better! Here are two or three ripe peaches. You said it was like heaven. Don't you think all pleasant things ought to make us think of heaven?"

"Oh, by George," he replied; "my dear lady, did you ever have a bullet in your shoulder? I can't think, for torment. I can only feel."

"That may have its use, too," said she, simply. "I have been told that pain is a great preacher."

The patient smiled grimly. "He gets a fellow's attention, any way, if that 's good preaching!"

"Ann, Ann!" exclaimed her brother. "Don't talk to him. Don't talk, especially any — I mean, he is too tired."

"I do not think I hurt him, brother," she returned, in a quiet aside. "But there are errands which may not be delayed to wait for our times of ease."

"Oh, it is no matter, doctor," said the officer, smiling, as he half heard Dr. Wendell's comment. "I like it. Don't say a word. It would be a pleasure even to be scolded by a woman. It is all right, I know! Thank you, miss. A little water, please." And then the doctor and his sister turned to the other bed.

"Major Morton, I believe?" said the doctor.

"Yes, John Morton, Fifth Pennsylvania Reserves. Confound the bed, doctor, how hard it is!

Are all your beds like this? It 's all over hummocks, like a damson pie!"

The doctor felt that somehow he was accused.

"I never noticed it," said Wendell. "The beds are not complained of."

"But I complain of it. However, I shall get used to it, I suppose. There must be at least six feathers in the pillow!"

"It is n't feather. It is hair," remarked Miss Wendell. "That 's much cooler, you know."

"Cooler!" replied the major. "It 's red hot. Everything is red hot! But I suppose it is myself. Confound the flies! I wonder what the deuce they 're for! Could n't I have a net?"

"Flies?" reflected Miss Wendell. "They must be right — but — but they are dirty!" She wisely, however, kept silence as to the place and function of flies in nature. "I will ask for a net," she said.

"Oh, yes, do," he returned; "that 's a good woman."

"I am not a good woman," exclaimed Miss Wendell, "but I will ask about the net."

"Oh, but you will be, if you get me a net," continued the patient. "And ask, too, please, about my wife. She was to be in the city to-day."

He spoke like one used to command, and as if his discomforts were to receive instant attention. In the field no man was easier pleased, or less exacting about the small comforts of camp, but the return to a city seemed to let loose all the habitual demands of a life of ease.

Dr. Wendell promised to see about the lady.

Mrs. Morton was to come from Saratoga, and why could not Dr. Lagrange see him at once? Every one kept him waiting, and he supposed Mrs. Morton would keep him waiting, like every one else.

At length Miss Wendell said, "My brother has his duties here, sir. I think I can go and see about it. You must needs feel troubled concerning your wife. As you look for her to-day, I might meet her at the depot, because, if, as you have said, she does not know to what hospital you have been taken, she will be in great distress, — great distress, I should think."

"Yes, great distress," repeated Major Morton, with an odd gleam of amusement on his brown face. "But how will you know her? Stop! Yes — she telegraphed me she would come by an afternoon train to-morrow, and I am a day too soon, you see."

"There are only three trains," said Miss Wendell, looking at the time-table in an evening paper, which an orderly had been sent to find. "I can go to them all, if you wish. I do not mind taking trouble for our wounded soldiers. It is God's cause, sir. Don't let it worry you."

Morton's mustache twitched with the partly controlled merriment of the hidden lips beneath it. There was, for his nature, some difficulty in seeing relations between a large belief and small duties. There was the Creator, of whom he thought with

vagueness, and who certainly had correct relations to Christ Church; but what had he to do with a woman going to look for another woman at a depot?

"You might tell my sister, major, what Mrs. Morton is like," suggested Dr. Wendell.

"Like?" returned Morton, rather wearily, and then again feebly amused at the idea of describing his wife. "Like, like? By George, that 's a droll idea!"

Most of us, in fact, would have a little trouble in accurately delineating for a stranger the people familiar to us, and would, if abruptly required to do so, be apt to hesitate, or, like the major, to halt altogether.

"Like?" he again said. "God bless me! why, I could n't describe myself!"

"But her gown?" said Miss Wendell, with ingenuity, and remembering, with a sense of approval of her own cleverness, that she herself, having but two gowns, might through them, at least, be identified.

Major Morton laughed. "Gown? She may have had twenty gowns since I saw her. It is quite eighteen months. You might look for a tall woman, rather simply dressed, — handsome woman, I may say. Small boy with her, a maid, and no end of bundles, bags, rugs, — all that sort of thing. You must know."

Miss Wendell was not very clear in her own mind that she did know, but, seeing that the wounded man was tired, accepted his description as suffi-

cient, and said cheerfully, "No doubt I shall find her. Good-night."

"Beg pardon, doctor, but I did n't quite catch your name," said the patient.

"My name is Wendell, — Dr. Wendell," returned the doctor.

"Thanks; and one thing more, doctor: send me some opium, and soon, too. I am suffering like the devil!"

"How little he knows!" thought Miss Wendell, with a grave look and an inward and satisfactory consciousness that her beliefs enabled her at least to entertain a higher and more just appreciation in regard to the improbable statement he had made.

"Yes," replied the doctor. "We 'll see about it." He had a feeling, not quite uncommon in his profession, that such suggestions in regard to treatment were in a measure attacks on his own prerogative of superior intelligence. "We shall see," he said, "when we make the evening round."

"Confound the fellow, and his evening round!" growled the major under his mustache. "I wish he had my leg, or I had him in my regiment."

But happy in the assertion of his professional position, Dr. Wendell had rejoined his sister, the more content because he felt that she had relieved him of the trouble of finding the wife of the officer. Like many people who, intellectually, are active enough, he disliked physical exertion. At times, indeed, he mildly reproached himself for the many burdens he allowed his sister to carry, and yet

failed to see how largely she was the power which supplemented his own nature by urging him along with an energy which often enough distressed him, and as often hurt his self-esteem. There are in life many of these partnerships: a husband with intellect enough, owing the driving power to a wife's sense of duty, or to her social ambitions; a brother with character, using, half-unconsciously, the generous values of a sister's more critical intelligence. When one of the partners in these concerns dies, the world says, "Oh, yes, he is quite used up by this death. Now he has lost all his activity. Poor fellow, he must have felt it very deeply."

II.

Moods are the climates of the mind. They warm or chill resolves, and are in turn our flatterers or our cynical satirists. With some people, their moods are fatal gifts of the east or the west wind; while with others, especially with certain women, and with men who have feminine temperaments, they come at the call of a resurgent memory, of a word that wounds, of a smile at meeting, or at times from causes so trivial that while we acknowledge their force we seek in vain for the reasons of their domination. With Wendell, the moods to which he was subject made a good deal of the sun and shade of life. He was without much steady capacity for resistance, and yielded with a not incurious attention to his humors, — being either too weak or too indifferent to battle with their influence, and in fact having, like many persons of intelligence, without vigor of character, a pleasure in the belief that he possessed in a high degree individualities, even in the way of what he knew to be morbid.

One of these overshadowing periods of depression was brought on by his sister's mild remonstrance concerning his want of punctuality, and by the reproof of his superior, Dr. Lagrange, or, as he

much preferred to be addressed, Major Lagrange, such being his titular rank on the army register.

Miss Wendell had gone home first, and Wendell was about to follow her, when he was recalled by an orderly, who ran after him to tell him of the sudden death of one of his patients. Death was an incident of hospital life too common to excite men, in those days of slaughter; but it so chanced that, as regards this death, Wendell experienced a certain amount of discomfort. A young officer had died abruptly, from sudden exertion, and Wendell felt vaguely that his own mood had prevented him from giving the young man such efficient advice as might have made him more careful. The thought was not altogether agreeable.

"I ought never to have been a doctor," groaned Wendell to himself. "Everything is against me." Then, seeing no criticism in the faces of the nurses, he gave the usual orders in case of a death, and, with a last glance at the moveless features and open eyes of the dead, left the ward.

There is probably no physician who cannot recall some moment in his life when he looked with doubt and trouble of mind on the face of death; but for the most part his is a profession carried on with uprightness of purpose and habitual watchfulness, so that it is but very rarely that its practitioners have as just reason for self-reproach as Wendell had.

Very ill at ease with himself, he walked toward the station, where, having missed his train, he had

to wait for half an hour. Sitting here alone, he soon reasoned himself into his usual state of self-satisfied calm. It was after all a piece of bad fortune, and attended with no consequences to himself; one of many deaths, the every-day incidents of a raging war and of hospital life. Very likely it would have happened soon or late, let him have done as he might. A less imaginative man would have suffered less; a man with more conscience would have suffered longer, and been the better for it.

At the station in Germantown he lit his pipe, and, soothed by its quieting influence, walked homeward to his house on Main Street.

He was rapidly coming to a state of easier mind, under the effect of the meerschaum's subtle influence upon certain groups of ganglionic nerve cells deep in his cerebrum, when, stumbling on the not very perfect pavements of the suburban village, he dropped his pipe, and had a shock of sudden misery as he saw it by the moonlight in fragments; a shock which, as he reflected with amazement a moment later, seemed to him — nay, which was — quite as great as that caused by the death of his patient, an hour before!

He stood a moment, overcome with the calamity, and then walked on slowly, with an abrupt sense of disturbing horror at the feeling that the pipe's material wholeness was to him, for a moment, as important as the young officer's life. The people who live in a harem of sentiments are very apt to lose

the wholesome sense of relation in life, so that in their egotism small things become large, and as often large things small. They are apt, as Wendell was, to call to their aid and comfort whatever power of casuistry they possess to support their feelings, and thus by degrees habitually weaken their sense of moral perspective.

It may seem a slight thing to dwell upon, but for self-indulgent persons there is nothing valueless in their personal belongings, and the train of reflection brought by this little accident was altogether characteristic. Thrown back by this trifle into his mood of gloom, he reached his own house, and saw through the open windows his sister's quiet face bent over her sewing-machine, which was humming busily.

About two years before this date, Wendell and his sister had left the little village on Cape Cod to try their fortunes elsewhere. These two were the last descendants of a long line of severely religious divines, who had lived and preached at divers places on the Cape. But at last one of them — Wendell's father — became the teacher of a normal school, and died in late middle life, leaving a few thousand dollars to represent the commercial talent of some generations of Yankees whose acuteness had been directed chiefly into the thorny tracks of biblical exegesis. His son, a shy, intellectual lad, had shown promise at school, and only when came the practical work of life exhibited those defects of character which had been of little moment so long

as a good memory and mental activity were the sole requisites. Persistent energy, sufficing to give the daily supply of power needful for both the physical and mental claims of any exacting profession, were lacking. In a career at school or college it is possible to "catch up," but in the school of life there are no examinations at set intervals, and success is usually made up of the sum of happy uses of multiplied fractional opportunities. His first failure was as a teacher, one of the most self-denying of avocations. Then he studied medicine, and was so carried away by the intellectual enthusiasm it aroused in him that could he have retired into some quiet college nook, as a student of physiology or pathology, he would probably have attained a certain amount of reputation, because in such a career irregular activity is less injurious. Want of means, however, or want of will to endure for a while some necessary privations, inclined him to accept the every-day life and trials of a practicing physician in the town where he was born. The experiment failed. There was some want in the young man which interfered with success at home, so that the outbreak of the war found him ready, as were many of his class, to welcome the chances of active service as a doctor in the field. A rough campaign in West Virginia resulted very soon in his suddenly quitting the army, and finding his way to Philadelphia, where his sister joined him. She readily accepted his excuse of ill health as a reason for his leaving the service, and they finally decided

to try their luck anew in the Quaker town. Miss Wendell brought with her the few thousand dollars which represented her father's life-long savings. Yielding to her better judgment, the doctor found a home in Germantown, within a few miles of Philadelphia, as being cheaper than the city, and in the little, long-drawn out town which Pastorius founded they settled themselves, with the conviction on Ann's part that now, at last, her brother's talents would find a fitting sphere, and the appreciation which ignorant prejudice had denied him elsewhere. What more the severe, simple, energetic woman of limited mind thought of her brother, we may leave this, their life-tale, to tell.

The house they rented for but a moderate sum was a rather large two-story building of rough gray micaceous stone, with a front lit by four windows. Over the door projected an old-fashioned penthouse, and before it was what is known in Pennsylvania as a stoop; that is, a large, flat stone step, with a bench on either side. Across the front of the house an ivy had year by year spread its leaves, until it hung in masses from the eaves, and mingled on the hipped roof with the Virginia creeper and the trumpet vine, which grew in the garden on one side of the house, and, climbing to the gable, mottled in October the darker green with crimson patches. Behind the house a half acre of garden was gay with tiger lilies, sunflowers, and hollyhocks, with a bit of pasture farther back, for use, if needed.

The house had been, in the past, the dwelling of a doctor, who had long ceased to practice, and to it the sister and brother had brought the old furniture from a home on Cape Cod, in which some generations of Puritan divines had lived, and in which they had concocted numberless sermons of inconceivable length. Notwithstanding his sister's economic warnings, the doctor had added from time to time, as his admirable taste directed, many books, a few engravings, and such other small ornaments as his intense love of color suggested.

As he now entered the sitting-room, the general look of the place gave him, despite his mood, a sense of tranquil pleasure. The high-backed, claw-toed chairs, the tall, mahogany clock, with its cock on top, seeming to welcome him with the same quiet face which had watched him from childhood, were pleasant to the troubled man; and the fireplace tiles, and the red curtains, and the bits of Delft ware on the mantel were all so agreeable to his sense of beauty in form and color that he threw himself into a chair with some feeling of comfort. His sister left her work, and, crossing the room, kissed him. Evidently he was her chief venture in life! From long habit of dependent growth the root fibres of his being were clasped about her, as a tree holds fast for life and support to some isolated rock, and neither he nor she was any more conscious than the tree or rock of the economic value which he took out of their relation. On his part, it was a profound attachment, — merely an

attachment; on hers a pure and simple, venerative love. Women expect much from an idol and get little, but believe they get everything; and now and then, even as to the best a woman can set up, she has cankering doubts.

"Brother," said Miss Wendell, cheerfully, "I was thinking, before you came in, how thankful we should be for all our life, just now. You are getting some practice," — then observing his face, "not all you will have, you know, but enough, with the hospital, to let us live, oh, so pleasantly!" Patting his cheek tenderly, she added, "And best of all for me, I feel that you are not worried, that you are having a chance, at last."

"Yes, yes," he answered, "I know, I know! I only hope it will continue."

"Why should it not? By the time you cease to to be an assistant surgeon — I mean, when this horrible war is over — you will have a good hold on practice, and you will only have to love your books and microscope and botany a little less, and study human beings more."

"I hardly know if they are worth the studying! But never mind me. I am cross to-night."

"Oh, no, that you are not. I won't have you say that! You are tired, I dare say, and troubled about all those poor fellows in the hospital."

Wendell moved uneasily. She was sitting on the arm of his chair, and running her hand caressingly through his hair, which was brown, and broke into a wave of half curl around his forehead.

Her consciousness as to much of her brother's outer range of feelings was almost instinctive, although, of course, it misled her often enough.

"I knew that was it," she said, with a loving sense of appreciation. "I was sure it was that. What has happened at the hospital! I heard Dr. Lagrange call you back. Oh, it was n't about being late — and such a hot day, too!"

"No, I was n't bothered about that. It was about a sudden death, that happened just before I left. You may remember that officer in the far corner of the ward."

"What, that nice young fellow, a mere boy! Oh, Ezra," she added, after a pause, "I sometimes thank God, in these war times that I am not a mother! Do you think it 's wrong to feel that way, brother?"

"Nonsense, Ann! You might find enough to annoy yourself about, besides that. When some one comes for sister Ann you can begin to think about the matter. What 's the use of settling theoretical cases? There 's quite enough of real bother in life that one can't escape, and is forced to reason about."

Ann arose, her eyes filling. "Yes," she said, "yes — I dare say," her thoughts for a moment far off, recalling a time when, years before, she had been obliged to decide whether she should give up her life with her brother and father, and go to the West to share the love and wealthier surroundings of a man whose claim upon her was, she felt, an

honest and loving one. Had he too been poor, and had she been called by him to bear a life of struggle, it is possible she might have yielded. As it was, habitual affection and some vague sense of her power to fill the wants of her brother's existence made the woman's craving for self-sacrifice, as a proof to herself of the quality of her love, sufficient to decide her, and she had turned away gently, but decisively, from a life of ease. Yet sometimes all the lost loveliness of a mother's duties overwhelmed her for a dreaming moment. "Yes," she said, at last, "you are right. It 's always best to live in the day that is with us. But what I wanted to say was that you must not let such inevitable things as a death no one could have prevented overcome you so as to unsettle you and lessen your usefulness to others."

"Oh, no, of course not!" He felt annoyed: this lad pursued him like a ghost. "Don't let us talk of it any more," he said. "I broke my meerschaum, coming home."

"Oh, did you? But I 'm very sorry, Ezra."

"Yes; it seemed like the death of an old friend."

"Don't you think that is a great deal to say, — an old friend?"

"Not half enough."

She saw that he was annoyed, and, knowing well the nature of the mood which possessed him, returned.

"Ah, well, brother, we will buy another friend

to-morrow, and age him as fast as possible. Bless me, it is ten o'clock!" and she began to move about the room, and to put things in the usual neat state in which she kept their sitting-room. The books were rearranged, the bits of thread or paper carefully picked up, a chair or two pushed back, a crooked table cover drawn into place.

This was a small but regularly repeated torment to Wendell. He did not dislike a neat parlor, — nay, would have felt the want of neatness; but this little bustle and stir at the calmest time of the day disturbed him, while he knew that in this, as in some other matters, Ann was immovable, so that as a rule he had ceased to resist, as he usually did cease to resist where the opposition was positive and enduring.

This time, however, he exclaimed, "I do wish, Ann, for once, you would go to bed quietly!"

"Why, of course, you dear old boy! I just want to straighten things up a little, and then to read to you a bit."

"I would like that. Read me Browning's Saul."

"Yes," she returned cheerfully, "that is always good;" and so read aloud with simple and earnest pleasure that exquisite poem.

It soothed the man as the harp of the boy shepherd soothed the king.

"What noble verse!" he said. "Read again, Ann, that part beginning, 'And the joy of mere living,' and humor the rhythm a little. I think it is a mistake of most readers to affect to follow the

sense so as to make a poem seem in the reading like prose, as if the rhythm were not meant to be a kind of musical accompaniment of exalted thought and sentiment. How you hear the harp in it! I never knew anybody to speak of the pleasure a poet must have in writing such verse as that. It must sing to him as sweetly as to any one else, and more freshly."

"Yes," said Ann. "I have seen somewhere that everybody who writes verse thinks his own delightful."

"No doubt, — as every woman's last baby is the most charming. But I should think that neither motherhood nor paternity of verse could quite make the critical faculty impossible. Shakespeare must have been able to appreciate Hamlet duly."

"I don't know," said Ann.

Her brother often got quite above her in his talk, and then she either gave up with a sort of gasp, as the air into which he rose became too thin for her intellectual lungs, or else she made more or less successful effort to follow the flights, or at least to deceive him into the belief that she did so.

Her brother was fond of Hamlet, which has been, and always will be, the favorite riddle of many thoughtful men. He liked to read it to her, and to have it read to him. She had suddenly now one of those brief inspirations which astonish us at times in unanalytic people. She said, "I sometimes think Hamlet was like you, — a little like you, brother!"

Ezra looked up at his sister with amused surprise. Human nature, he reflected to himself, is inexhaustible, and we may rest sure that on Methuselah's nine hundred and sixty-ninth birthday he might have startled his family by some novelty of word or deed.

"I hardly know if it be a compliment," he said aloud, with a little smile. "I should like to be sure of what Hamlet's sister would have said of him. Go to bed and think about it!"

After Ann had left him, Wendell himself retired to what was known as his office, a back room with a southern outlook on the garden. Here were a few medical books, two or three metaphysical treatises, a mixture of others on the use of the microscope and on botany, with odd volumes of the older and less known dramatists, and a miscellaneous collection representing science and sentiment. On the table was a small microscope, and a glass dish or two, with minute water plants, making a nursery for some of the lesser forms of animal and vegetable life. In a few minutes Wendell, absorbed, was gazing into the microscope at the tiny dramas which the domestic life of a curious pseudopod presented. He soon began to draw it with much adroitness. It is possible for some men to pursue every object, their duties and their pleasures, with equal energy, nor is it always true that the Jack-of-all-trades is master of none; but it was true of this man that, however well he did things, — and he did many things well, — he did none with sufficient in-

tensity of purpose, or with such steadiness of effort as to win high success in any one of them.

It was nearly twelve o'clock when he was startled by hearing his sister call, "Ezra, Ezra! Do go to bed. You will oversleep yourself in the morning."

"Yes, yes, I know," he answered, quite accustomed to her warning care. "Good night. I won't sit up any later. It is all right."

Ann sighed, as she stood barefooted on the stairs, and had she known Mr. Pickwick might have shared his inward presentiment.

III.

Dr. Wendell had very early acquired a few patients in the widely scattered village. Most of them were poor, and were either mechanics, or else workmen attached to the many woolen mills in his neighborhood. But as time went on he had also attracted, by degrees, a few of a somewhat better class. His manners were gentle and amiable, and manners have a good deal to do with business success in medicine, — indeed sometimes insure a fair amount of it even where their possessor has but a moderate share of brains, since patients are rarely competent critics as to all that ought to go to make up a doctor, and in fact cannot be.

Meanwhile, his life was not a hard one. He spent his early morning at the hospital, after seeing any urgent cases near his home; and, returning to Germantown for his midday meal, went back to the hospital to make the afternoon visit.

The next day, after the events we have described, as he came, on his usual evening round, to the beds of Major Morton and Captain Gray, the Confederate officer, he was interested to see that his sister had accomplished her errand, and was standing beside Morton, in company with a lady, and a tall and handsome lad who might have been seventeen years

of age or more. Glancing at the group, Wendell went first to the wounded rebel, whose face brightened visibly at the coming of the surgeon.

"I have been waiting to see you," he said. "I don't think I am as well as I was. I feel the being shut up here. It 's such an awful change from the saddle and the open air! Please to sit down, doctor, and don't be in a hurry. I must talk to you a little. You doctors are always in such a hurry!"

"It 's rather hard to help it," replied Wendell, good-humoredly; "but is there anything especial I can do for you?"

"Yes. I want to know distinctly if I can pull through. It 's a thing you doctors hate to be asked, but still it is a question I would like to have answered."

"I do not see why you cannot. You have a serious wound, but you were not hurt in any vital organ. *I* should say you ought to get well."

"Well, it 's a pretty grim business with me, doctor. I am alone in the world with one motherless girl, and I want to get well! I must get well!"

"And so you will."

"No; to tell you the truth, that 's my trouble. I don't think I shall."

"Oh," exclaimed Wendell, "you may say you don't feel as if you should; but when you say you don't think you will, I am afraid I feel inclined to laugh, which is perhaps very best thing I can do for you. Is n't it as well to let me do the thinking for you?"

"I can't explain it," said Gray, dolefully, "but the idea sticks in my head that I shall die."

"But why? Are you weaker? Do you suffer more?"

"No; I have nothing new except a queer sensation of confusion in my head, and — then I can't change my ideas at will. They stick like burrs, and — I can't get rid of them."

"Quinine, I guess," said Wendell, lightly.

"No; I 've taken no end of that, in my time. I know how that feels. Would you mind asking Dr. Lagrange to see me?"

"Oh, of course not; but it is a rule not to call on the surgeon in charge unless there is some grave necessity."

"Well, I don't want to violate any rules. You are all very kind, and for a prisoner I ought to be satisfied; but I am sure that I am going to die."

"I do most honestly think you are needlessly alarmed," Wendell replied; "but if you wish it, I will ask the doctor to look at you."

The assistant surgeon had a faint but distinct impression that this wish implied a distrust of his own judgment, and to one of his temperament this was displeasing; yet knowing the request to be not unreasonable, he at once sent an orderly for the surgeon in charge, and saying, "I will see you with Dr. Lagrange in a few minutes," turned to the other bed.

Major Morton looked better; his mustache was trimmed, and the long Vandyke beard became well his rather sombre face.

"This is my wife," he said. "Dr. Wendell — Mrs. Morton," — Mrs. Morton bowed across the bed, — "and my boy Arthur. They have just come, doctor; and do not you think I could be moved to a hotel to-day?"

"Well, hardly; but I will talk it over with Dr. Lagrange, who will be here presently."

Busying himself in getting chairs brought for the patient's friends, he glanced at them more attentively, — little dreaming what share in his future the manly lad and his handsome, somewhat stately mother were to have. Her perfectly simple manners, touched with a certain coldness and calm which made any little display of feeling in her tones the more impressive, had their full effect on Wendell. This type of woman was strange to him. Her husband might have been full forty, and she herself some three or four years his junior; but she was yet in the vigor of womanhood, and moved with the easy grace of one accustomed to the world. Whatever were her relations to her husband, — and they had met, as Wendell learned afterwards from his sister, without any marked effusion in their greeting, — for all other men, at least, she had a certain attractiveness, difficult to analyze.

The type was, as I have said, a novel one to Wendell; nor was he wrong in the feeling, which came to him with better knowledge of her and more accurate observation, that the satisfaction which she gave him lay in a group of qualities which beauty may emphasize, but which, like good wine,

acquires more delicate and subtle flavors as years go by.

"Mr. Morton seems better than I expected to find him," she said, "and I know you must have taken admirable care of him. With your help, I am sure we could get him to a hotel; and then in a few days I might open our country house on the Wissahickon, and we could easily carry him there, — easily, quite easily," she added, with a gentle but emphatic gesture of shutting her fan.

Wendell had less doubt after she had spoken than before. In fact, his intellectual judgment of the case was unaltered; but although his medical opinions upon a disease, or a crisis of it, were apt, like the action of the compass needle, to be correct, they were as liable to causes of disturbance, and were likely to become doubtful to their originator in the face of positive opponent sentiments; or even of obstacles to their practical results which should never have had any influence. Although unconscious of it, he was in this manner quite frequently controlled by his sister's tranquil decisiveness. Without knowing why he yielded, he began now to edge over mentally to Mrs. Morton's side of the argument.

He said, in reply to her, "Of course, if you have a country house, that would make the change more easy."

In fact, it seemed pleasantly natural to find a ground of agreement with this woman, whose stateliness made her courtesy yet more gracious. She

herself did not, it is true, see very clearly the reasonableness of his answer, but she was not apparently surprised at his defection from his former statement.

"We 'll settle it somehow," groaned the major. "Do something; get me out of this den, at least. The rebels were a trifle to these flies!"

"Of course, my dear," assented Mrs. Morton, "I wanted to feel that Dr. — Dr. — you said" —

"Wendell, — Wendell is my name."

"Oh, yes, Dr. Wendell! I was thinking more of the kind remark you had made than of your name! It is a good old New England surname, I think. But before Dr. Lagrange comes, I want to say how gratified I am to find that the decision to which my own anxiety leads me should be justified by your medical judgment."

Wendell was a little taken aback at this ready assumption. As he looked up, hardly knowing what answer to make, Dr. Lagrange came hastily to join their group, and was met by Mrs. Morton, with whom he was evidently on terms of easy acquaintanceship.

"Dr. Wendell is, I think, rather inclined to believe that the major may be taken to a hotel, and in a few days moved out to our country home. I hope our doctors won't differ. What do you think?"

"Ah, my lady," and the surgeon shook his finger at her warningly, "you have changed many folks, — I mean, many men's ideas; and I fancy you are

keeping your hand in with my young friend. I don't think that this morning, before you came, when we discussed the question, Dr. Wendell was then quite of your opinion."

Wendell exclaimed, "I did not at that time understand" —

"Oh, I dare say not, and I don't blame you much for taking Mrs. Morton's view. But practically, my good friends, Morton's leg must be taken into account!"

"Of course," replied Mrs. Morton, "that is the first consideration, and really the only one."

"He has," urged Lagrange, "a rather serious wound, and to-day a quick pulse and a little fever. I would rather he waited a few days, — two or three, perhaps." Then Wendell spoke eagerly, under his breath, a few words to his superior, on which the latter continued, "Yes, that will do. Indeed, I am very much obliged by your thoughtfulness for my friend. Dr. Wendell has," and he turned to Mrs. Morton, "a room in the hospital, a very good and airy room, which he wishes Major Morton to occupy."

Wendell added, "It is no great sacrifice, as I rarely use it at night; but in any case, Major Morton is welcome to it."

The young fellow at Morton's side had been thus far a listener. Now he exclaimed, warmly, "Thank you very much, sir! It is a great kindness to give to a stranger."

"For my part," said Mrs. Morton, "I have not the courage to refuse."

"I should think not!" cried the major. "By Jove, refuse!" and he contributed his own share of thanks, with a reasonable amount of emphasis. Then he asked, "Are there nets in the windows?"

"Yes," returned Wendell, a little amused.

"And is the room a good size?"

"Quite needlessly large for one," answered Lagrange, quickly, "and we are very full. Would you mind sharing it with another officer? It will be only for a day or two."

Morton did not like the prospect, but saw at once the need to yield.

"Of course," he replied, "if you are crowded; but I would rather," and he spoke low, "have my rebel neighbor than some one I do not know at all."

"But, dear," said Mrs. Morton, "I am sure that when Dr. Lagrange considers it he will see that you would be far more comfortable alone."

"I am afraid," returned Lagrange, "that I must accept the major's proposition. And now I shall run away, for fear you persuade me to change my mind; and I shall take Wendell, lest you get him, too, into some mischief. Come, doctor, let us see Gray!" He turned smiling to the rebel officer, with whom he conversed attentively and patiently for some time. Then he moved away with a cheerful face from the bed, saying some pleasantly hopeful words of the comforts of the new room. But as soon as he was out of earshot he spoke to his junior, "Watch that man well. There is some-

thing odd in his manner. He has a way of emphasizing all his words. Perhaps it is natural, but I never like to hear a wounded man insist that he is going to die! And by the way, stick to your own opinions, and don't let the pressure or notions of lay folks push you off a path you meant to tread. Mrs. Morton is what my old nurse used to call 'main masterful,' but I have found her, as you may, a good friend. In fact, they are not very far-away neighbors of yours. I will remember this when they move Morton to the country."

Wendell thanked him. He felt that he himself had done a gracious and serviceable act to pleasant people.

"And what a fine lad that is, of Morton's!" said Lagrange. "I like his face."

"Yes; a nice boy, I should think," returned Wendell.

When the two officers, the next morning, were eagerly eating a well-cooked breakfast, in their new and cheerful quarters, under the care of an orderly assigned to them by Wendell, Morton, who was in high good-humor, remarked, "By George, this is better than that ward! I feel like myself."

"It is certainly more comfortable," rejoined his room-mate, — "good coffee, fruit, — I have n't seen an orange before for a year, — but I don't feel quite right yet."

"Oh, you 'll come up," said Morton, who was apt to relate the condition of others to his own state.

"I suppose so, — I hope so! But I don't feel sure, and that strikes me as odd, because I have been hit before, and never had the depression I now feel. Then that lad of yours made me think about my own child."

"And where is he?"

"At school. It 's a girl. I did not tell you it was a girl. She has been at school in Rahway. I could not either get her away or send money to her, and she and I are pretty much alone in the world. By George, I don't suppose she would know me!"

"Why not send for her?" suggested Morton, whose enormous increase in comfort disposed him to indulge his usual desire that everybody about him should be satisfied, provided it did not incommode Major Morton. "We 'll get that doctor of ours to ask his sister to write and have the child brought on to see you, and my wife can take care of her for a few days."

"But I have absolutely no money!"

On this point Morton was delightfully indifferent. He had always had money and what money buys, and just now, in the *ennui* of illness this man interested him.

"I can lend you what you want. I 'll arrange it."

"I do not know how I can thank you!"

"Then don't do it." The major was languidly good-natured, and had the amiability so common among selfish people. A West Point man by education, he had served his two years on the plains,

and then left the army, to return to it with eagerness, as it offered command, which he loved, and a rescue, for a time at least, from the monotony of a life without serious aim or ambition.

After some further talk about the girl, Morton asked, "Where were you in that infernal row at Gettysburg? There 's no use in either of our armies attacking the other. The fellows who try it always get thrashed. I began to think we should never be anything else but thrashed."

"I am sorry the charm is broken!" said Gray. "I was in the Third South Carolina, when we got our quietus on the crest of Cemetery Hill. What a scene that was! I can see it now. I was twice in among your people, and twice back among my own; but how, I can no more tell than fly. Once I was knocked down with a stone. It was like a devilish sort of Donnybrook fair."

"How were you hurt? I was on the crest myself, and after I got this accursed ball in my leg I lay there, and as I got a chance in the smoke I cracked away with my revolver. I remember thinking it queer that I never had struck a man in anger since I grew up, and here I was in a mob of blood-mad men, and in a frenzy to kill some one. Droll, is n't it?"

"For my part," returned Gray, "I was as crazy as the rest until I got a pistol ball in my right shoulder. By George, perhaps you are the very man who shot me!"

"I am rather pleased to be able to say," re-

sponded Morton, stiffly, "that I do not know whom I shot."

"I should be very glad to think it was you."

"And why, please?"

"Well, it would be a comfort to know it was a gentleman."

The idea had in it nothing absurd to Morton. He thought that perhaps he would have felt so himself, but he was pretty sure that he would not have said so, and he answered with perfect tact: "For any other reason, I should infinitely regret to think it had been I; and were it surely I, your pleasant reason would not lessen the annoyance I should feel;" and then, laughing, "I will promise not to do it any more."

At this moment Wendell came in, and, seeing the flushed face of Captain Gray, said, —

"I think I would n't talk much, and above all don't discuss the war."

"Oh, confound the war, doctor!" exclaimed Morton. "It is only the editors who fight off of battle fields. However, we promise to be good boys!"

"I don't think our talk hurts me," said Gray. "I was saying that perhaps the major might be the man who shot me. Queer idea, was n't it? And what is more odd, it seems to keep going through my head. What 's that Tennyson says about the echo of a silent song that comes and goes a thousand times?"

"A brain echo?" murmured Wendell. "I, for

one, should n't think it very satisfactory to know who shot me. I should only hate the man unreasonably."

"But don't you think that it would be pleasanter to know he was a gentleman?"

To Wendell, with all his natural refinement, the sentiment appeared inconceivably ludicrous, and, laughing aloud, he rejoined, "I don't think I can settle that question, but I hope you will quit talking. I will get you some books, if you like. Oh, by the way, here are the papers;" and so saying he walked away, much amused, and in a mood of analytic wonder at the state of mind and the form of social education which could bring a man to give utterance to so quaint an idea.

A moment later he returned to the bedside to discuss a request of the major, who asked him to write about Captain Gray's child.

"If you wish it," said Wendell, "I think my sister might go to Rahway."

"Oh, no," said Gray; "that is quite too much to ask."

"Then," suggested Morton, "as you are so kind, could n't you take the little girl in for a few days, doctor? I — that is to say, there will be no trouble about the board."

"Certainly, if you wish it," answered the doctor. "I am quite sure that my sister will not object. Ann shall write at once. But is that all? Can I do anything else for you? No? Well, then, good-night."

IV.

Among the many permanent marks which the great war left upon the life of the nation, and that of its constituent genera of human atoms, none were more deep and more alterative than those with which it stamped the profession of medicine. In all other lands medicine had places of trust and even of power, in some way related to government; but with us, save when some unfortunate physician was abruptly called into public notice by a judicial trial, and shared for a time with ward politicians the temperate calm of newspaper statements, he lived unnoted by the great public, and for all the larger uses he should have had for the commonwealth quite unemployed. The war changed the relations of the profession to the state and to the national life, and hardly less remarkably altered its standards of what it should and must demand of itself in the future. Our great struggle found it, as a calling, with little of the national regard. It found it more or less humble, with reason enough to be so. It left it with a pride justified by conduct which blazoned its scutcheon with endless sacrifices and great intellectual achievements, as well as with a professional conscience educated by the patient performance of every varied form of duty

which the multiplied calls of a hard-pressed country could make upon its mental and moral life.

Vast hospitals were planned and admirably built, without the advice of architects, by physicians, who had to learn as they went along the special constructive needs of different climates, and to settle novel and frequent hygienic questions as they arose. In and near the locality of my tale, the hospitals numbered twenty-five thousand beds for the sick and wounded; and these huge villages, now drawn on by the war, now refilled by its constant strife, were managed with a skill which justified the American test of hotel-keeping as a gauge of ability. A surgeon taken abruptly from civil life, a country physician, a retired naval surgeon, were fair specimens of the class on which fell these enormous responsibilities. We may well look back with gratification and wonder at the exactness, the discipline, the comfort, which reigned in most of these vast institutions.

In this evolution of hitherto unused capacities, Dr. Wendell shared. In some ways it did him good service, and in others it was harmful. The definiteness of hospital duty was for a man so unenergetic of great value. He was a wheel in a great piece of mechanism, and had to move with the rest of it. In time this might have substantially altered his habits; but in a hospital there are, as elsewhere, opportunities for self-indulgence; indeed, more in a military hospital than elsewhere, since there the doctor lacks largely the private criticism

and the demands of influential patients, which in a measure help to keep men alert in mind, thoughtful, and accurate. Moreover, the rush and hurry of the wholesale practice of medicine, inseparable from overflowing military hospitals, was hostile to the calm study of cases, and to the increasing exactions which new and accurate methods of diagnosis and treatment were then, and are now, making. On the whole, the effect on Wendell was bad. He did his work, and, as he was intelligent, often did it well; but his medical conscience, overweighted by the need for incessant wakefulness, and enfeebled by natural love of ease and of mere intellectual luxuries, suffered from the life he led, and carried into his after days more or less of the resultant evil. Happily for his peace of mind, as for that of many doctors, no keen critic followed him, or could follow him, through the little errors of unthoughtful work, often great in result, which grew as he continued to do his slipshod tasks. Like all men who practice that which is part art, part science, he lived in a world of possible, and I may say of reasonable, excuses for failures; and no man knew better than he how to use his intellect to apologize to himself for lack of strict obedience to the moral code by which his profession justly tests the character of its own labor.

When Wendell reported for duty, on the following day, and had signed, as usual, the roll which indicated that he was present at a set hour, he was told that the surgeon in charge desired to see him;

and accordingly he stopped in the little room which that officer reserved for his own personal needs. As Wendell paused in front of the table, Dr. Lagrange looked up, and putting aside his pen said, —

"Good-morning. I have endeavored, Dr. Wendell, not to forget that the gentlemen on duty here have not all of them had the advantage of army life, but there are certain matters which, if not of first importance, have their value, and which I cannot overlook. I observe that you do not always wear an assistant surgeon's uniform, and that last week, when officer of the day, you wore no sash. Pardon me, I am not quite through. Twice, of late, you have signed your name as present at the hour of the morning visit, when in one case it was ten minutes after, and in another eleven minutes after."

"I did not think, sir, it could make any difference."

"That, sir, I must look upon as a criticism of a superior's opinion. If I did not, as surgeon in charge, consider it of moment, I should not have spoken; but, and with your permission, I now speak only as an older man, and one, as you know, who is disposed to like and help you."

"Of course, I shall be very much obliged," Wendell said. It must be added that he did not feel so. He inferred that, as he had a better intellectual machinery and much wider knowledge than the superior officer, he must be naturally elevated above the judgments of such a person.

"It is not," continued Lagrange, "the want of punctuality to which I now refer, — that is an official matter. It is that you should shelter yourself under a false statement, however minutely false."

Dr. Wendell began with irritation: "I do not think any one could suspect me — could suspect me of that!"

"Then," replied Lagrange, "you were not aware of the hour? I hope I don't annoy you. I like you too well to do so without cause, and, as I said, I am conscious that I am putting the matter in an unofficial shape."

Wendell bowed, and, having reflected a little, said, "Thank you, sir. Pray speak freely. I can only be grateful for whatever you think fit to say."

"Well, then," added Lagrange, "let me go a step further. Try to be more accurate in your work, and — may I say it? — a little more energetic, just a little," and the old army surgeon smilingly put out his hand. "Don't spoil my predictions of success for you in life! You have better brains than I ever had, but" —

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Wendell, touched with the other's want of egotism.

"Yes, yes," went on Lagrange, laughing; "but I should beat you at most things, notwithstanding. There — you won't misunderstand me, I am sure," he added, with a gentle sweetness, which like most bits of good manners was alike pleasant and contagious.

The younger man returned, "You are very good to me. I shall try to remember."

"Well, well," said Lagrange; and then, in his official tones, "Have you seen Major Morton?"

"Not yet, sir. I have just come."

"True — of course; but that other man, — what 's his name, the rebel?"

"Gray, sir. He is in a curious way. I think his head must be wrong. He insists that Major Morton shot him."

"That is strange," returned the surgeon; "very unusual, in fact. Some accident sets an idea in a man's head, and there it stays. I have heard of such cases. I would like to separate them at once, but we have not a vacant bed. See him as soon as possible."

When Wendell left Lagrange's room he went immediately to visit Gray. The door was open, to secure a cool draught of air; and hearing the rebel officer speaking, the assistant surgeon paused a moment to listen. The voice he heard was decided, irritated, and a little loud:

"I think I remember now; yes, sir, you were on the ground. I saw you shoot, and I don't blame you!"

"Good heavens, you could n't have seen me! By George, I never heard anything so absurd! Have the goodness not to repeat it."

"You doubt my word, then, sir?"

"Oh, no, what stuff!"

"Then apologize, sir. I say, apologize!"

"Pshaw!"

At this moment Wendell entered.

"Captain Gray," he said, "this won't do! You have forgotten your promise about talking. Come, put this thermometer under your tongue," and with a finger on his pulse Wendell waited patiently a few minutes. "Hum," he said to himself, not liking the results of his observation. Then he asked a few questions, and wrote a prescription, which meant decided and immediate treatment.

"Am I ill?" said the captain.

"You are ill enough to keep quiet."

"But he did shoot me."

"Nonsense! You are feverish, and your head is out of order."

"But he shot me! I say, he shot me!"

"Oh, confound it!" growled Morton. "Suppose I did?"

"There, I knew it," exclaimed Gray, — "I knew it, sir! He says so."

"I said no such thing! Doctor, may I trouble you a moment?" As Wendell approached his bed, he added, "I cannot stand this any longer. Make some arrangements for me to leave as soon as Mrs. Morton comes back. That will be in an hour. At any risk, at all risks, I must be carried to my own home in the country. Perhaps I did shoot him: who the devil knows or cares!" And as, in his annoyance, his voice rose sufficiently to be heard by Gray, the latter broke in anew: —

"Well, sir, I am glad you admit it. And my

little girl, — who is to take care of her? I say," he repeated sharply, "who is to take care of her? Not this man."

"Oh, she will be looked after," responded Wendell kindly, desiring to soothe the patient, whose diseased fancies were evidently hurting both himself and his neighbor. "Ah, here comes my sister! Ann, let me speak to you a moment;" and so saying, he led her out of the room, and explained to her that Captain Gray was very ill and delirious, and that it would be necessary to separate him from Major Morton.

Ann Wendell at once reëntered the room, took her seat at the bedside, and sat fanning the poor fellow, while her brother left them to attend to other duties. Mrs. Morton arrived soon after; and as Lagrange agreed with his subordinate that it would now be best to move her husband, the proper arrangements were soon completed.

As the major was being carried out of the room, he said, "Captain Gray, I hope you will soon get well; and meanwhile, whatever we can do for you is at your service."

"I sha'n't get well," returned Gray. "I am going to die, to die, and my death is on your head!"

Morton made no reply.

"Don't mind him," the young surgeon whispered quietly to Mrs. Morton, who had turned, with a startled air, — "don't mind him; he is raving."

"Poor fellow," she murmured softly.

"I don't blame him," cried Gray, in a high

shrill voice, "but he did it. And oh, my little one, my little one! Friendless, friendless!" and he sank back, faint and exhausted, upon the pillow, from which he had risen with an effort of frenzied strength.

"You won't forget to call to-night?" said Mrs. Morton to Wendell. "What a strange delusion! What a painful scene!" Then the nurses carried her husband out of the room and down-stairs to the ambulance, while Ann Wendell, disturbed and pitiful, sat fanning the fevered man who remained. As she looked at him, his face struck her painfully. It was thin and drawn, beaded with sweat, and deeply flushed.

"When will my child come?" he asked.

"To-morrow. I have had a telegram, and I will bring her here at once. Yes, I will bring her; now don't talk. We will take care of her until some of her relatives are heard from, or she can return to school, till you are well and exchanged."

"You promise me?"

"Yes, I promise," Ann replied, hardly knowing what to say.

"And that man, — he could n't help it! That 's war, that 's war! He shot me, you know. He says so. I saw him. You won't let them have my child, will you, — now, will you?"

Ann had a pretty clear idea that nothing was less likely than that the stately dame, who overawed her with easy graciousness, would desire to assume charge of the little waif.

"Make yourself easy. God will provide."

"Yes, yes, I know, of course; but you will — take care — yes — you will?"

"I will," said Ann, hardly clear as to what she was pledging herself to do, but feeling sure that she must say yes to whatever he asked, and that she was not given time to reflect as to what she ought to do.

"All right," moaned Gray. "Turn this pillow, please. Lord, how wretched I feel!"

Ann did as he desired. She had a strong feeling that she ought to say something to relieve him: "You must not say Major Morton shot you. How could you know that? You must have made him feel horribly. I would n't say it if I were you!"

"But," cried Gray, seizing her wrist, "I know it, and before you came he said it! He acknowledged he shot me! What was that you said about to-morrow? To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow! Stop, excuse me, Mistress Wendell, — I am not at all clear in my head; but let him say what he likes, he shot me! Remember that, he shot me!"

Miss Wendell was deeply distressed. She could not appreciate the state of mental disturbance which possessed the man, and to her inexperience it seemed at once improbable and yet possible that he could have been sure of the hand which had smitten him. It all left her with one of those vague but lasting mental impressions which may wear out with time, or be deepened by future circumstance,

and which are, as it were, memorial ghosts that trouble us despite our unbeliefs in their reality. For the present she put it aside; but in her simple life it was a great and strange event, never pleasant to think or talk of. She stayed with Gray till it was quite late, and then went home with her brother, promising to return the next afternoon, when she hoped to be able to bring the little girl.

The following day she busied herself, as usual, about the household and among the flowers in her little garden, until the hour came to meet the train, which was, little as she then guessed it, to bring into her life new cares and fresh anxieties. It was close to the late twilight of summer when she stood waiting at the station. Her life had been, as I have said, simple. Her nature and her creed alike taught her to be eternally willing to do for others acts of kindness; indeed, to be ever ready, for these had grown to be habitual, and excited in her mind no comment whatsoever; so that in this sense virtue was its own reward, in that it made each new act of virtue easier, and so kept calm a conscience which was only too apt with rebuke. She now stood silently watching the crowd of soldiers going to the front, of officers in varied uniforms, all the eager, hurried travel of ever anxious men and women moving southward. At last she saw a conductor coming toward her, and guessed at once that the girl at his side was the child for whom she had come.

"I am Miss Wendell, and I am here to meet a child named Gray."

"Yes," the conductor replied, "that is all right. I was to turn her over to Miss Wendell. Here is the check for her trunk. Good-by, Missy!" and so saying he dropped the child's hand and walked away. The girl looked after him with a sense of desertion, and then turned and faced Ann Wendell, silent with the shy, speechless uneasiness of girlhood.

"You are Hester Gray?" said Miss Wendell.

"Yes, ma'am. Where is my father?"

"You shall see him soon. Come, my dear, you must be tired; we won't talk now;" and so, having arranged for her trunk to be sent to Germantown, Ann got into a street car with her charge, and set out for the hospital.

Ann was acutely observant of but one person in her small world — the brother whose life had become one with her own; and she therefore troubled herself but little about the child at her side, save to say now and then a kind word, or to notice that the dress of brown holland, though clean and neat, showed signs of over use.

The girl was perhaps fifteen years old, but looked singularly childlike for her age. She had been sent four years before, when her mother died, to a school in New Jersey, where, save for one brief visit from her father before the war broke out, she had had the usual school life among a large number of girls, to whom was applied alike a common system, which admitted of no recognition of individualities. But this little existence, now sent adrift from its

monotonous colony of fellow polyps to float away and develop under novel circumstances, was a very distinct and positive individual being. She sat beside Ann Wendell, stealing quick glances at her, at her fellow-passengers, and at the houses and buildings they were passing; not reasoning about them, but simply making up the child's little treasury of automatically gathered memories, and feeling, without knowing that she felt it, the kindliness and quiet incuriousness of the woman beside her. Then, seeing a man drop a letter into a postal box in the street, she suddenly remembered herself, and flushing said, —

"I have a letter to give. If father is too sick, I am to give it to some one."

"I will take it," said Ann, and the child presently extracted a letter, which the careful schoolmistress had pinned fast in her pocket. It was addressed to "Charles Gray, Esq." "I will take care of it, my little woman."

The child made some vague reflections on her being called a little woman, and the train of thought, brief as are always the speculations of childhood, ended at the door of the great brick hospital. Then they walked through the lounging crowd of invalids about the portal, past the sentinel, and up the stairs, until Ann knocked softly at the sick man's door. It was opened by a nurse, who said in a low voice that they were to wait a minute, until he sent for the doctor. While they lingered, Ann heard the deep, snoring respiration

of the man within, and tightened her grasp on the child's hand, knowing only too well what the sound meant. A moment later Wendell appeared with the surgeon-in-charge. The two men said a few words apart, and then the elder took the child's hand, and sitting down on the staircase drew her toward him.

"What is your name, my dear?"

"Hester, — Hester Gray."

"How long since you saw your father?"

"Ever so long, sir. I don't remember."

"Well, you know when people are sick they do not look as they do when they are well, and your father, Hester, is very sick; so if he is too sick to know you are his own little girl, you must n't be afraid, will you?"

"No sir, I will try not to be."

"And don't cry," he added, as he saw the large blue eyes filling. Then he took her tenderly by the hand, and saying cheerily, "Now come along; we will go and see papa," he led her into the room, followed by Ann and her brother. When Ann saw the dying man's face, she turned, and whispered to Wendell, —

"Oh, I would n't have done it at all! Why should she see him?"

Wendell made no answer. He was himself wondering why this tender little life should be forced into rude acquaintance with death. The surgeon knew better; knew full well, with the wisdom of many deaths, what a softened sweetness this grim

memory would grow to have, in years to come, — what a blank in the life of love its absence might come to be.

Charles Gray was lost even now to the world of loves and hates. Gaunt with past suffering, his cheeks flushed with moving spaces of intense purplish-red, he lay on his back. His eyes, wide open, stared up at the ceiling between moveless lids, while the irregularly heaving chest and the dilating nostrils told of the closing struggle for the breath which is life. Ann wiped from his brow the sweat which marks the earning of death as of bread, — the sign of all great physical effort, — and said in a rising voice, —

"Here is Hester, Captain Gray! Captain Gray, this is Hester! Don't you know her? Your Hester."

He made no sign in reply. Nature had not waited for man to supply her anæsthetics, and the disturbed chemistries of failing life were flooding nerve and brain with potent sedatives.

"Too late!" murmured Wendell.

A slight convulsion passed over the features of the dying man. The child looked up in curious amazement. Her little life gave her no true key to the sorrow of the scene.

"Kiss him," said Ann; "speak to him, Hester. Perhaps he will know you."

The child touched his forehead, recoiled a second from the chill, sweating brow, and then kissed it again and again.

"Speak to him, Hester, — try," repeated Ann.

"Father — father!" cried the child.

"A little water," said the surgeon-in-chief, knowing that to swallow sometimes for a moment awakens the slumbering consciousness.

The dying man struggled with the spoonful of fluid, then swallowed it abruptly, and moved his lips.

"Does he say anything?" said Wendell.

Ann bent down, and again wiped his face. This time he murmured something, and Ann rose instantly, with a pale face.

"He does n't know any one," she said. "Come, my child, kiss him again, and we will go out for a while."

What Ann had heard were broken words, sent back to her alone through the closing doors which opened to one world and shut out another: "Shot — shot — he shot me!"

"Come," she repeated to the dazed and trembling girl, "the surgeons must be with him alone, dear."

Hester obeyed without a word, crying, she hardly knew why; for tears are the large resource of nature in most of the incidents that startle or perplex the emotional years of childhood; and to be truthful, there was more of terror than of grief in the scene for a child to whom years of absence and silence had made all memories of home and father somewhat hazy and indistinct.

"I will take her away with me at once," said

Ann to Dr. Lagrange. "It will be no good for her to see him again."

"You will do the kindest thing for her, I think," he answered; and with this, hand in hand with the child, who pressed close to her side, Ann went out into the street, thoughtful and dismayed. She had seen hundreds of wounded men, in her constant hospital visits, but no one knew who had hurt them; so that in her eyes this single definite fact of individual war seemed like murder. The whole matter of war, indeed, was horrible to Ann. She somehow saw God in its larger results, but not in its tragedies. How could God mean one man to slay another! There, it is true, were the Amalekites and the Jebusites; but as to them, the command to destroy had been sufficiently distinct. Still, this present war was a just war, in Ann's eyes, and her brother had no doubts at all, which was sometimes a comfort to her, and would have been a larger one had Wendell shared her own religious creed, which he certainly did not, being vaguely inclined at times to a half acceptance of the mysticism of Swedenborg. His belief in the competency of his own intellect made it necessary for him to possess some views on matters of religious beliefs, but so far he had never got much beyond the easy goal of destructive criticism.

When the two doctors began to descend the stairs from the dying man's room, the elder said, "Mrs. Morton has written to me to say that she will be glad to meet any expense you may be put to about this child."

"She is a kind and generous woman, I should think," replied Wendell.

"Well, yes, in a cool, quiet way she is. I like her myself, and you will find, if you don't cross her views, that she will be a good friend. But that is her trouble. She respects none but manly, resolute men, and yet she dearly loves her own way. Money is a very little thing to her, and to Morton also. What a rapid case of pyæmia! I wish one understood it better, or that somebody could take it up and work at it. We have plenty of material. Why could not you try your hand?"

"I have been thinking of it," said Wendell.

In fact, he was always planning some valuable research, but was never energetic enough to overcome the incessant obstacles which make research so difficult.

"We will talk it over," said Dr. Lagrange. "What do you think of Jones, in Number Five? He seems to me a malingerer, and a poor actor at that."

And so the talk went from the frequent tragedy of death to its causes, and thence to the hospital work and discipline; the scamps who were feigning illness; and who were well enough to go to the front, who must be discharged, who be turned over to the provost marshal.

The contrasts in a doctor's life are always striking, and never more so than in the splendid and terrible years of our great war, which added a long list of novel duties and a training foreign to his

ordinary existence. These two men, coming from the every-day calamity of a death-bed, instantly set aside the emotions and impressions, which no repetition ever quite destroys for the most callous doctor, and began to discuss the scientific aspects of the disease with which they had been so vainly battling. They both felt more or less the sense of defeat which waits for the physician as he leaves the room of the dying, — a keener discomfort than the unthinking public can well imagine; but both were able to lose it in their interest in that which caused it.

V.

Several days had elapsed since the rebel captain lay dying in the hospital. He had been buried quietly, with but two mourners, Miss Wendell and his child, and the world of events had gone by and left him. The child remained for the present at Dr. Wendell's; and now it was night in his house, and Hester was safe in bed in Ann's room, while the brother and sister sat in the little library. The last few days had been full of unusual incidents, which were to be more fertile in consequences than they could guess; and the woman had been busy, and the man, for once, hard-worked. The hospital was full to overflowing, and the largest affair in his life as a physician had come to him in the shape of a request to take charge of Major Morton, whose country home lay within a mile or two of the doctor's house. Altogether Wendell was pleased and busy. The new call flattered and interested him, and was professionally a distinct lift. Ann herself regarded the matter as proof of her brother's fitness, and, in her calm New England way, as a substantial gain, to be dealt with as a new duty, and used as a means to get on honestly. For Wendell it was more complicated. He felt, or believed himself, equal to any medical call upon his intelligence,

— a feeling common enough among younger men, and apt to fade as years go on. But, besides all this, it had for him another value, which would have amazed his sister, could she have known it. He was naturally a refined and also a very sensitive man, cultivated, not deeply, but over much surface, and he felt the want of such appreciative and responsive companionship as makes talk about certain things possible. He liked sympathy, and, as is common with such natures, women pleased him more than men; nor, indeed, was he well fitted, on account of his self-regard and his girl-like tenderness, to contract strong and virile attachments to men. In the Morton household and its surrounding circles of friends and relatives, he felt himself in an air which he breathed, if not at once with ease, certainly with pleasure. The poor whom he attended he did not like, because their houses were often uncleanly and their ways rough. Indeed, he disliked all that belonged to poverty, as he did other unpleasing things. He saw this class of patients knowing that he must, but made brief visits, and found true interest impossible where his senses and taste were steadily in revolt.

Perhaps as a doctor of the rich alone he might have done better. It seems probable that he should never have been a doctor at all.

What he had felt when he first saw Mrs. Morton he felt more and more as he came to be socially at ease in her circle. The quiet ways, the calm readiness for all social accidents, and the habitual

automatic attention to the wants and feelings and even the prejudices of others struck him as comfortable ; and without distinct analysis of the cause, he came to recognize that he was thrown among people who, for some reason, were acceptable to him, and among whom it would be very agreeable to pursue his profession. Had he heard the conversation which led finally to his being asked to see Major Morton, he would have been less satisfied; but perhaps, could we hear all that is said behind our backs, existence would be nearly impossible except for the few, who would then make what was left of it intolerable.

Mrs. Morton had said a few words to Dr. Wendell as to her desire that he should see her husband at his country home ; but she had by no means looked on this as a finality, and indeed did not decide the matter until, in prospect of the major's removal, she had a further talk with her old acquaintance, Dr. Lagrange.

She saw him at the hospital, and was accompanied by a friend, who was a somewhat inconstant companion, but who generally came usefully to the front, as was said in war slang, when no one expected to see her, or when there was some real need for her presence ; " not," as she remarked, " that I am of the slightest value, my dear, but one's friends become so interesting when they are in trouble."

Mrs. Morton drove with Mrs. Westerley to the hospital ; and when the second lady's pleasant face appeared at the window of her friend's light Ger-

mantown wagon, with its well-matched pair of Morgans, three men in uniform, lounging at the gate, rushed forward in a competitive effort to open the carriage door, and to anticipate the tardy descent of the footman.

"Do you go at all to the hospitals?" said Mrs. Westerley, as they entered the doorway. "I have been absent so much that I have scarcely seen you this summer, and I have n't caught up to your present ways."

"No," said Mrs. Morton, "the Sanitary is all I can attend to; and what with Mrs. Grace and one or two other obstructives, it promises to be more than any one person ought to be called upon to manage. As long as it meant havelocks and tooth-brushes and pocket-handkerchiefs, it was dolls' play; but now it is very serious business, as you know, dear."

"For my part, I like the hospital work best. But I never was here before. How neat it is! What clever housekeepers these men make! They told me at Chestnut Hill hospital that they made quite a good income out of the egg-shells and coffee-grounds."

At this moment an orderly approached, touched his cap, and asked if they would wait in the surgeon's office. Dr. Lagrange would be at leisure in a few minutes.

"Might we stand at the ward door and hear the band?" said Mrs. Westerley.

"Of course, ma'am," replied the orderly. "The

surgeon's visit is over." Accordingly they lingered, looking across the vast ward, once an armory drill-room, while from the lower floor the strains of one well-known air after another floated upward, and in far corners here and there roused memorial echoes in bosoms weary of war and camps. Evening band play was always a cheerful interruption of the grim monotony of sick life, and when, presently, with the neutral disregard of the raging contest far away found in hospitals, the band struck up "Maryland, My Maryland," the rebel wounded roused themselves, and some bluecoat cried out cheerfully to a graycoat near by, "Good for you, Johnny Reb!" "Ah," said Alice Westerley, "if we women kept hospitals, there would be no rebel music, my dear. We are too good haters."

"And there should be none," returned Mrs. Morton, gravely.

"I thought as much," said her companion. "But surely it is well. Perhaps we had better not wait any longer. How peaceful it is! I could stay an hour."

Then they turned away, followed by pleased glances from beds near by, and were presently standing in the surgeon's official waiting-room, the furnishings of which amused Mrs. Westerley immensely, as in fact few things failed to interest her, from an animal to a man.

"What is this?" she asked. "It looks like a diagram of a crab. Bless me, it is the plan of the Stump hospital! What in the world, Helen Mor-

ton, is a Stump hospital? And here — do come here! This is a diet table. 'Ordinary diet,' 'Extra diet,' 'Number four diet!' I think I shall introduce the system at home. And did you ever see such neatness? Look at the table; really, the man has three pen-wipers!"

At this moment Dr. Lagrange entered.

"We were admiring the perfect order of your arrangements," said Mrs. Morton.

"It is simply a necessity, in a life like mine. I am glad you like it."

"But you must like it yourself."

"Yes, I do, and I wish others thought as much of it as I do. It would make life easier. Now I have the utmost trouble about letters; people write them on such different sizes of paper, and when you come to file them they don't match. In the hospital and in the service generally we have the same difficulty."

"I see," replied Mrs. Morton, "how very vexatious it must be."

"One has a like annoyance about people's opinions," remarked Mrs. Westerley, with entire gravity.

The surgeon looked puzzled.

"Yes, certainly," he said, in some doubt, being a slow thinker, and not having time to consider the matter.

Mrs. Morton availed herself of his hesitation to say, "I came to consult you as to whether you still think it will be wise for me to ask Dr. Wendell to

see Mr. Morton. There seem to be reasons for and against it. What do you think, doctor?"

"Hum!" replied Lagrange; "on the whole I should ask him. He knows the case and its needs. He lives within call, and I suspect will feel the summons so flattering that you will get from him — indeed can ask from him — more frequent visits than an older man would be apt to pay. I think I would put the case in his hands; and, if agreeable to you, I will myself see my old friend, now and then."

"Oh, that would remove all my objections."

"Wendell is older than he looks," said Lagrange.

"Of course," returned Mrs. Morton, "it is very, very absurd; but I have always had doctors whom I knew, and who have had a certain knowledge of one's life and ways. You understand me, doctor?"

"Yes, I suppose I do. Wendell has been brought up among plain New England people."

"But he can't put his manners into his pills, you know," said Mrs. Westerley.

"It is his manner more than his manners," explained her friend.

"Oh, it 's the singular, not the plural, you object to!" laughed Mrs. Westerley. "For my part, I would take him and educate him. I think, if I were ill, — which I never am, — I would like the task myself. He is very good looking, and if he dressed well would be presentable enough."

Lagrange smiled approval. "I think I would risk it;" and so then and there it was settled that

Dr. Wendell should become the medical adviser of Major Morton.

Meanwhile their talk had been interrupted a half dozen times by reports of contract physicians, orderlies, provost-marshals, messengers, and the officer of the day. Lagrange disposed of each in turn with careful precision of well-considered reply.

"Do you never lose your temper?" said Mrs. Westerley to him, as they descended the stairs together. "You are a first-rate housekeeper. But pray tell me, what is the Stump hospital? It must be a new one."

"It is for men who have lost limbs," he replied.

"How droll!" said Mrs. Westerley. "Where do they send generals who lose their heads?"

"How absurd you are, Alice!" exclaimed Mrs. Morton.

The surgeon did not smile, and was still curiously examining the question when they left him at the hospital gate. He had himself what men call dry humor, and like persons so endowed was often slow in giving a jest the hospitality of mirthful acceptance. Perhaps it had to undergo a preliminary process of assimilative desiccation.

A few days afterwards, as I have said, in the late evening, Dr. Wendell sat at home with his sister. He was happy, as usual in an hour of leisure, over a family circle of rotiferæ, which he had found on the shore of Fisher's mill-pond, and he only looked up now and then to reply to Ann, or murmur some result of his observations without taking

his eye from the glass. Ann Wendell sat, meanwhile, busily sewing.

"We have a great many things to talk over, brother," she said.

"Yes, I know. Go on; I can hear you."

"But I wish you would listen, really."

"Oh, I 'll listen! What is it? When I stir these fellows up they look very much as we must have looked to some higher intelligence at the beginning of this war. It 's almost laughable! Hum! what a curious representation of threes in the cilia, and the same in the allied species! Certainly, Swedenborg was right about the mystical value of that numeral."

A shade of vexation crossed Ann's face. She altogether disapproved of Swedenborg and the New Jerusalem and all mystical numbers whatsoever. She said abruptly, "I think that girl up-stairs is more important."

"Yes, relatively, my dear."

"What can we do with her? The school-mistress says in her letter that she has not been paid for a year, and cannot take the child back. No one in the South will claim her. She is on our hands, so far as I can see it. Who is to support her, I would just like to know?"

"Mrs. Morton," replied Wendell, "says" —

"'Says' — yes, I know; but do you suppose it will last? It 's not reasonable to think it will last."

"Oh, well, we 'll just keep her, and see. She is a nice child. Did you notice how interested

she was about that emperor moth I caught last night?"

"'Keep her!' I suppose we must. We can't turn her out into the street, or send her to the almshouse."

"Then why, my dear Ann, should we discuss it? Upon my word, there 's a queer rotifer. I don't think I ever saw it before."

Ann sighed. "You won't think it worth while, or right, under the circumstances, to put the child in black? It is only an added expense."

"Do just what you like, Ann."

Ann's needle flew nervously, and a little faster, until it broke, and there was a moment's pause while she sought and threaded another, when, wise with woman's wisdom, she changed the talk.

"What did her father die of, brother?"

"Pyæmia, we call it."

"There was a post mortem, was n't there?"

"Yes, but it did not change the diagnosis. And oh, by the bye," he added, with sudden animation, "such a droll thing! During the examination, yesterday, I found the ball. When Major Morton happened to speak of Gray's death, I mentioned it casually, you know, thinking he might feel an interest. When I did so, he asked if it was a minié. I said No; a pistol ball."

Ann looked up, startled. "A what?" she said.

"A Colt, No. 6. I really begin to think Morton was troubled about what that poor fellow said in his wanderings, because he remarked to me how

odd it was that it should turn out to be a pistol ball."

"Do you think he really shot him?"

"Stuff, Ann! The notion was simply ridiculous! But suppose, for a moment, that Morton had shot him. It was his duty. It was what he was there for."

"I would n't like to think it."

"No, I suppose not. No woman would. Just sharpen my pencil. I must draw this fellow while he is so lively. How these vibrios bother one!"

Then Ann, having done as he desired, rose, and, putting aside her work, said, "Good-night, brother. I am sorry to trouble you about the child, but how can I help it?"

"Oh, it 's all right," he returned. "The thing settles itself. We must wait."

In fact, waiting was a great resource in Wendell's life; nor, in this case, did Ann's homely sense help her to any more acceptable solution.

"Well, good-night, brother. I am tired, — tired all over."

Wendell looked up at her. "Yes, I was afraid you were doing too much. Can't you keep a little more quiet? There is no need for you to go to the hospitals. You look run down."

"I don't know. I 'm more weary than tired; and I miss the sea, and the old home, and — and — Ezra — the chickens — and at night I want to hear the rote of the water on the beach."

"We might manage a little visit up there, when Major Morton gets better."

"I don't think we could afford it."

"Oh, yes, we 'll manage. Good-night. Now don't worry yourself," and he kissed her kindly. "Good-night, again."

There was on Ann Wendell's mind another and a graver subject. She would have liked to speak out her regret that no minister had seen the sick soldier before he died, but she knew that on all such matters it was useless to look for sympathy from Wendell. She was firmly anchored, and he was carelessly adrift as to all spiritual beliefs.

VI.

Wendell was about thirty when he came to Germantown, and his years and some previous experience had made his way easier than is usual with new-comers; while at the same time his comparative maturity rendered the up-hill toil among the lower social classes difficult to bear. He had once before gone through the same sharp test of character, — the test which makes or mars, degrades or ennobles, every physician in degrees which are determined by the nature of the moral capital with which he starts, and also more or less by the intellectual interest with which he regards his profession.

As to this alone, Wendell was more fortunate than many others. His work attracted him, but not continuously; and, as I have said, the contact which he began to have with the refined classes made him more comfortable in his circumstances, and better pleased with himself and his surroundings. Thus far he had cared little about children, save in a mildly sentimental way. They exacted sacrifices, and as a rule did not seem to give much in return. His own unusual culture lifted him so much above the range of the somewhat hard, practically educated school-mistresses of his New Eng-

land home that he had found in the women he had known little that was attractive, and had been merely repelled by their business-like, over-active conscientiousness. Now, with the prolonged stay of Hester Gray under his roof, and the novel world opened to him through the Mortons, an unread leaf of the life book was turned over before him, and pleasant enough he found it.

The child had few memories of home or family, and in childhood the wounds of grief or losses heal as readily as do those of the physical frame. Very soon the rather monotonous school-days and the sudden and strange hospital scenes faded, along with the shyness born of contact with strangers. Then the little bud of active, alert, maidenly life began to put forth rosy petals with modest coyness, one by one, and to take with instinctive eagerness delight in life.

To his surprise, Wendell became gradually interested in the girl, while to his sister she was a constant and often a bewildering phenomenon. Nevertheless, Ann looked carefully after her dress and food, and soon found it not unpleasant to resume, with an apt and clever pupil, her old work of teaching; so that the new charge was in no way a weight or a cause of anxiety to Wendell. Like most men of his type, he got at first a mere sentimental pleasure out of the child, and either shirked all care for her, or gave her mere material life no thought whatsoever.

The last days of October had come, and one af-

ternoon, as was now quite often the case, Dr. Wendell called cheerfully for Hester. Ann appeared at the head of the stairs. "She has yet an hour to finish her lessons. I would n't take her away from them," she said. "It is so difficult to form regular habits, if you always insist on her going to walk just when it is most inconvenient. I can't give her the time in the morning, because of the house, and the afternoons you are all the time spoiling."

"I am not always insisting, Ann. I want her to see the Mortons as often as possible. It is an excellent lesson for any girl to see such a woman as Mrs. Morton."

"Don't talk so loud; she will hear you," replied his sister, descending the stairs half-way. "I am not sure that a poor orphan like Hester is at all the better for such folks. It may not do much harm now, but when she gets older she will see a great many" —

"Oh, yes, my dear sister," he said, interrupting her, "perhaps so, perhaps not! All questions have two sides. I must have her to-day, anyhow."

Had Ann persisted, he would have yielded, as all but merely brutal men do yield to gently urgent women in their own homes; but it was not in Ann to deny her brother any pleasure.

"Well, this once," she said; and so Hester, joyous as a bird at the relief from confinement, was presently at the doctor's side, in the street.

These afternoon walks had become more and more frequent, as the summer waned and the tem-

pered heats of September prevailed. It was still needful for Wendell to visit Major Morton twice a day, and whenever his duties permitted escape from the afternoon round at the hospital he was apt to secure Hester as his companion, and start early enough to allow of a rambling walk, ending in a call on his patient.

The question of a horse and carriage had become a subject of discussion between the brother and sister; but despite some need for them, too much immediate expenditure was involved for more than mere thought at present, and the Mortons were as yet the only patients at any distance. These walks at this pleasant season were to Wendell a great delight, and the intelligent little companion, so strangely cast into his life, made them a yet more agreeable and varied source of happiness.

Far up the main street the sunlight shone on the gray and dusty turnpike, and lit the maples, aglow with red and gold, and caressed the mottled boles of the few stately buttonwoods, still erect in front of some grave-looking houses with Doric portals and green window blinds, standing back from the street, as if shunning the common line of lesser stone dwellings, the gray fronts of which were half covered to their hipped roofs with the gorgeous autumn blazonry of the Virginia creeper. At last, with the child at his side, he turned into School Lane, where he lingered a moment to show her the old schoolhouse, with the royal crown still shining on its little spire; and so along past modern villas

to the Township Line road, where, turning to the right, down the hill, they soon found their way into the wooded valley of the Wissahickon. At the little old covered crossing, long known as the Red Bridge, they passed over the brown, still stream.

"And now for a scramble, Hester," he exclaimed, and led the way up a shady hill, taking a short woodland path to Morton's house, which stood on a bluff looking down on a long reach of quiet water overhung by trees. A slight breeze was stirring the hazy atmosphere of the October woods, and the air was full of leaves, red and brown and yellow, sauntering lazily downward to help make up the brown gaps in the rustling carpet of red and gold. It was alike new and delightful to the bright little maid, this gorgeous mask of autumn. Wendell went along supremely happy, all his sensuous being alive to the color of the leaves, the plumed golden-rods, the autumn primrose, and the cool woodland odors.

"See, dear," he said: "this is the sumach, and it turns crimson; and that is the gum-tree, always first to get red, and now nearly all its beauties are gone. And are n't the ferns a nice brown? Let us get all the colors, and see how many we can find. Look at this sugar maple: the leaves are red and bordered with yellow. And here on the wood verge," he added, halting, "I found some aphides yesterday. They are rather late. Oh, here they are! Do you know, they are the cows which the ants keep;" and he told her all the queer story of the ants' domestic economy, while the little fellows

made incomprehensibly tortuous journeys, vast to them as that of Columbus.

Meanwhile, the child listened with rapt attention, gathering the leaves in her hands, and presently she flitted away in chase of a splendid moth, which she stored in her handkerchief, gathered into a bag, where it found itself in queer company with a beetle or two, and a salamander captured in a rill which crossed the path.

"Won't the long red thing get hurt?" asked the child. "Won't the beetle eat him?"

"No; if you even cut off his tail, it would grow again."

"But his legs?"

"If he were a crab, even his legs would grow again."

"But would mine?"

"No, I rather think not."

"Why would n't they?"

"I don't know."

"Oh!" The child was silent. It seemed to her strange that there should be anything that he did not know.

"Is n't it getting late?" she then said.

"Bless me, — yes!" cried Wendell. "Come along. It is nearly six, and I have to meet Dr. Lagrange. How came you to think it was late?"

"Miss Ann said I was to remind you; and I remembered, did n't I?" she added, with a quaint little triumphant sense of having fulfilled her small duty.

"Women are queer things," murmured Wendell; "big and little, they are queer!"

The girl overheard him.

"What is queer, sir? Am I queer?"

"No," he cried, "you are only nice," and he kissed the attentive, earnest face looking up at him. His own very natural act gave him a moment's shock of surprise. It was the first time that he had thus caressed her, and the small personage was somehow pleased; but she still recalled her office, and said, "We must hurry, or we 'll be so late."

"Yes, come along," he replied. "Forward march."

By and by they came out on the crest of the hill, and looked back on the wonder of the autumn woods.

He paused again in thought. "Some people fancy colors are like sounds of music, Hester."

"Like music, sir? I don't understand. Will I understand some day?"

"Perhaps. Now if each color was to become a sound, and all these trees were to sing, what a music that would be!"

"Would n't the birds be frightened?"

"Rather," said Wendell, laughing. He delighted to talk a little over the child's head, to see what answers he would get. "Oh, there is Mrs. Westerley!" he exclaimed, as they climbed a fence, and began to walk over the lawn toward the house. He knew Hester was timid and shy, owing to her want of frequent contact with the outside world of

men and women, so he said quietly, "Don't be afraid, Hester."

"No, sir."

"And this is the little girl I have heard about," said Mrs. Westerley, cool and handsome in white muslin, for the day was warm, and holding her straw hat swinging in her hand. "Dr. Lagrange is waiting for you, but I know you will have some delightful excuse. He has been here half an hour. I envy you doctors your wealth of excuses! I would like to join an apology class. I think, with time and practice, I could learn to fib quite agreeably."

Wendell was not yet up to the matter of small social badinage. It embarrassed him, and he hated to be embarrassed. "I was delayed," he said, gravely, "and" —

Hester felt stirred with some sort of vague consciousness that her pleasant companion was being taken to task. "I wanted him to stop too long in the woods for the leaves," she explained, and then proceeded to display as evidence a handful of her treasures.

"Oh, terrible infant!" laughed the lady. "A dangerous advocate, doctor. She was just in time to save your conscience."

Wendell flushed almost imperceptibly. "I was detained," he said. "If you will take care of Hester, I will go to the house."

"I will look after her," returned Mrs. Westerley. "Come, Hester, I love little girls. Let us

go into the garden. There must be some peaches yet."

"Oh, that will be nice!'

"Well, come, and let us look for them; and as to pears, I will give you a wheelbarrow load."

They were fast friends in ten minutes, and in a half hour returned to the house, Hester having eaten twice as much as was good for her.

Meanwhile there had been a consultation. Wendell had become uneasy about his patient's condition, and it was yet more plain to the elder physician that the drain of so grave a wound was being badly borne, and that Morton's increasing irritability and nervousness were the the growing results of his condition.

"What do you think of my husband?" said Mrs. Morton to the two surgeons, as they met her at the foot of the staircase.

"Dr. Wendell will tell you," said Lagrange, who was precise in all the little matters of the rights and functions of the attending physician.

"I hope that Dr. Lagrange will feel free to say what he thinks," replied Wendell, not sorry to shift an unpleasant burden.

"I am glad that one doctor, at least, can forget this eternal etiquette," exclaimed Mrs. Morton, a woman much used to have her own way and to set aside all obstacles to her will, and now troubled out of her usual calm of manner.

"You will pardon me, I am sure, if I say that it is good manners, not mere etiquette, my dear

friend," answered the surgeon, smiling; "but with Dr. Wendell's permission, I am wholly at your service. I don't — I should say, we don't quite like Morton's condition. He does not come up as he should do."

"Is he in danger?"

"No, he is in no immediate danger."

"Do you think he will get well?"

"We hope so."

"But what are his chances? I had no idea he was so ill! Why did you not tell me before?"

"We have only of late felt so uneasy. It is a question of strength of constitution, of physical endurance, and of power to take food. How competent these will prove no one can tell."

"But I must know," she said. "Are you sure that you have told me the whole truth?"

"Yes, so far as we know it."

"And you are certain?"

"Physicians can rarely be certain. Those who are most wise are the least apt to be so. If you were not in great trouble, I am sure that you would not have asked me again."

"You must excuse my impatience, doctor, but I wish I could have something more definite."

"I wish I could also, my dear lady. That is just one of the miseries of our profession. If it would make you feel easier to have any one else to see him with us, I am sure nothing would be more agreeable to Dr. Wendell and myself."

"Of course," said Wendell. This was not pre-

cisely true. He already had enough help in the way of sharing responsibility, and he distrusted in his inward consciousness the addition of some one of celebrity, who might possibly disturb his hold on an important case and family; for already he had been consulted as to the condition of Mrs. Morton's elder son, who was an invalid.

"No," returned Mrs. Morton wearily, "I only want to be sure, and I don't suppose any one can help us more than you. If you cannot make me sure, no one can."

The younger man felt that he might reasonably have been included in this statement of confidence.

"You will come often, and watch him closely?" she added.

"You may rest assured that nothing will be left undone," said Lagrange.

"What with Mr. Morton's state and Edward's, I am worn out," she returned.

"I am sorry for you, Wendell," said Lagrange, when they were parting. "You will probably have a losing fight to make. But it will not be the last one in your life. Good-by. See you on Thursday. And by the way, — and as I am an old fellow you won't mind it, — I would be a little more punctual. *I* don't mind it much myself, but these people think themselves important, and they will."

Wendell was never very patient under advice, and disliked it always; but he wisely thanked the elder man, and said good-by.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Westerley and Hester, laugh-

ing and happy, appeared on the back porch, which looked out on the garden, and extended along the back of a somewhat roomy and old-fashioned gray stone house.

As Mrs. Westerley looked up, she saw Mrs. Morton seated near the hall door gazing dreamily into distance. Arthur, her younger boy, knelt at her side, holding her hand, and her older son, a tall, broadly built, but pale young man of twenty, stood with one hand on her shoulder, his face disturbed and grave, and his eyes filling. As Mrs. Westerley came near, he left his mother, saying to the new-comer, "Mother has just heard from the doctors that my father is not so well. In fact, they are very uneasy about him."

"Oh, Edward, this seems very sudden! It can't be so bad. Let me talk with her alone. There, Arty, take my young friend to Dr. Wendell."

The younger lad, rising, kissed his mother's cheek, took Hester's hand, and followed by his brother, who moved with a certain feebleness of step, went into the house.

"Is this really so, Helen?" said Mrs. Westerley.

"Oh, I don't know. They say so. I cannot understand how a man of his vigor and health could be so pulled down. It is n't only his body, Alice, but he is irritable and exacting beyond belief."

"But you don't mind that, dear, in a sick man."

"Oh, no, I don't mind it." Yet she did. Sickness was to Mrs. Morton a sort of unreasonable

calamity, and held for her always some sense of personal wrong. When her children were ill, and especially Edward, this feeling of being directly injured rose to a pitch of angry indignation, and she then showed, despite her admirable tact and good breeding, that curious, wild, half-animal instinct of protective and defiant maternity which made the doctor's task no easy one. If she had analyzed the matter, she would have seen what was clear to her shrewd friend, that her children were far more to her than her husband. He had disappointed the keen ambitions with which she had begun her life with him. He had sympathized with her early dream of a political career for him until they were married, when, by degrees, it became clear that the small disgusts and coarse contacts of such a life were amply sufficient to defeat any display of energy in that direction, and that his love of power was incompetent as a motive to do more than to make him a selfish, amiable, well-bred despot in his own home. Then, as he had never balked his tastes, he had had some unpleasant intimacies, quite too much talked about for Helen's comfort. And so at last, having failed to arouse him to assert himself in any nobler fashion, the woman had come to feel that life was over so far as any aspirations for him were concerned, and to look to her two boys with anticipations which their young lives bade fair to fulfill. Then came the war, and Morton was drawn into that wild vortex, with a vague hope on his wife's part that at last he would illus-

trate a name which in former days had won a brilliant reputation in the colonial and later history of his country. And now this hope, too, was gone. His career in the army had been successful. He was brave, as all his people had been; and Helen Morton had felt a novel access of tenderness and seen new possibilities of happiness in his success. Two days before, she had learned that he was gazetted colonel of his regiment, and now it was all over! There was for her some feeling of defeat in all this, some sense of a too malignant fate. Throughout her married life she had writhed under the humiliating sense of feebleness that strong women feel in the face of ineffective struggles to urge a lower masculine nature into activities which shall gratify the desires for position and a career denied to themselves by the thralldom of social usage.

Then of late her temper had been sorely taxed. All that was worst in Morton was being accentuated by sickness, and, like most people on the rack of pain and weakness, he was undergoing the process of minor moral degradation which chronic illness brings to so many. Acute brief disease may startle us to better and graver thoughts of our aims and our actions, but prolonged illness makes more noble but a rare and chosen few. Mrs. Morton sat some time in quiet, and at last said abruptly, —

"Alice, this is the bitterest time of all these bitter years."

Mrs. Westerley knew in a measure what this meant, but she felt that it was necessary, as a mat-

ter of good sense, to ignore anything hidden in her friend's complaint, and to deal only with the palpable present.

"I don't think you ought to say that, my dear. You have those two boys. They do seem to me two of the nicest, sweetest-mannered fellows! It is touching to see how they hang around you. And as to the major, — we ought to call him 'colonel' now, I suppose, poor fellow! — he is only as yet an ill man. No one despairs about him."

"Oh, it is n't only that, Alice; although," she added, "God knows that is bad enough."

"I think I understand, dear."

"No, you don't. Indeed, how could you? No one understands but myself."

"Well, perhaps not all, not everything. But here is the nurse." Then Mrs. Morton went into the house, and Mrs. Westerley joined Hester and the doctor, who, having written his orders, was about to depart.

"There is a bit of twilight yet," said the lady. "I will walk with you to the creek."

"Shall we take the road?" he asked, moodily.

"If you please."

Wendell was uncomfortable, and he hardly knew why it was so. As there are people who feel slight atmospheric changes or electric conditions of the air, so there are others who are exquisitely alive to the little annoyances of social life. They are like a musician, who automatically feels the defects of this or that player in a great orchestra, and is

made unhappy by the keenness of that very appreciativeness which fits him to enjoy the perfection of harmony. If our eyes were microscopes and our ears audiphones, life would be one long misery; and a too delicate sense of the moods and manner of those about us is an almost equal calamity. Wendell had learned that there was some sting possible for him in the ways and talk of even the best bred, when tormented by trouble into naturalness of speech. It surprised and hurt him; nor could his reason prevent it now from causing one of those abruptly born senses of depression to which he was subject. Feebly yielding, as usual, to the mood, he walked beside the gay widow in silence.

"You seemed troubled about Mr. Morton," she began. "Are you troubled?"

"Yes," he said, glad to accept any excuse for his speechlessness. "Yes, I am a good deal troubled. It 's an awful thing to see death coming closer and closer, and to feel that you are in a measure held to be responsible."

He had not meant to go so far, but his depression colored his talk.

"Surely," she returned, "you do not mean that he will die?"

"No, not surely, — of course, not that exactly; only that he is ill, very ill."

"Is n't it rather sudden?"

"It is always so, you know. A patient gets worse, and the time comes when you have to say so. Then it always seems to be sudden."

"I don't believe that he will die. You don't know these Mortons, doctor. They have such constitutions! I am sure he will get well."

Mrs. Westerley had no belief in anybody's dying. Generally the people she knew were alive, and she herself was too much so to feel death at all as a common and relentless factor, getting, as time went on, increasing value in the complicated equation of being.

The conviction somehow singularly comforted Wendell, who, like other doctors, felt deeply the tone of those about him who held relation to the sick.

"You are very good to say so," he replied. "I find it often as hard to believe in life as you do in death."

"I do not wonder at that," she said. "But it is rather grim talk for the child! There, run on, Hester, and get me a bunch of those red ash berries. What a charming little woman she is! I would like to know who her people are. She has a pleasant, quiet flavor of the old manners about her, — such as used to scare me in my grandmamma Evelyn. I once knew a Mr. Gray from Edisto. I wonder if she belongs to that family? They were very blue blood, indeed, and I dare say did their wicked best to get us into this present muddle. I wish, for my part, we could tow Massachusetts and South Carolina out to sea, and anchor them together, and let them settle their difficulties!"

Wendell laughed. "It 's well you 're not a man. You would soon get into Fort Lafayette."

"Oh, that 's just one of the many advantages of being a woman! Don't you think I am horribly disloyal? I talked so to old Wilmington, the other night, that he says I am dangerous, and to-day he would hardly speak to me; but then he had been taking a great deal of the major's madeira, and his nose shone like a cheerful lighthouse!"

Wendell could not help being amused. He wished faintly in his heart that Ann Wendell, who was always good-humored in a level, even way, had some of this woman's gayety.

"I shall not inform on you," he said, smiling.

"It would n't be of any use. I gave a whole regiment toothbrushes, once, and when I get very bad I discipline myself and comfort my friends by sending a check to the sanitary commission."

"Rather dear penitence," he returned.

"Yes, is n't it? But one must do something, in these days. Now if I only were a man" —

"A man! Why?"

"How can you ask? I should be in it, in the war, at the front, I mean. I hate to see a man about the streets, when I know that we could crush it all out so easily if we just put forth our strength. I pity that boy, Edward Morton. He does so want to join the army, and is so wretched over his weak health."

"He is certainly much broken," said Wendell, "and I am afraid has little else than a life of inva-

lidism before him; and what is worse, he cares for nothing really but out-of-door life, — to shoot, fish, or ride, — and simply yearns after that wild cattle ranch in Texas."

"Yes, I pity him," she said, with sudden softness, wondering a little that the strong, healthy man at her side did not seem to quite take in the sadness of this broken life. "I pity the disappointed! Life has been so sweet and soft for me, and so joyous, every breath of it. Oh, I could build a very nice heaven out of this earth's possibilities!"

"Would n't it lack something?"

"Yes, it might; surely it would. But you must not put my gay moods to serious question. You have been so pleasant that I have come twice as far as I meant to. I hope you feel it to be your fault. Where are my mountain ash berries? Thank you, you dear child! How nicely you have tied the stems together! Good-night! And by the bye, I want to call on Miss Wendell. Pray tell her that I hope she will be at home to me, whether she is out to others or not. I must see that child again. Good-night!"

Wendell was flattered, amused, and puzzled. This was a new creature to him. The odd recklessness of statement, the sudden changes of position in regard to questions discussed, the touch of malice in her talk at times when she sketched a friend, these all bewildered the doctor. Mr. Wilmington said of her that she dealt little in amiable phrases and never did an unkind thing; and that to be her

friend was a frightful risk of character, and as good assurance of mild calumny as running for Congress.

"But then, my dear Mr. Wilmington," said the widow to that old gentleman, when, in a moment of utter exasperation, he betrayed his annoyance in this satirical sentence, "it is of no use to abuse my enemies; besides, I have none but you. I think my friends must like it, for they do not desert me; and I never abuse you, Mr. Wilmington, — never!"

VII.

When Wendell told his sister of the state of things at the Mortons', she said that he would have been wise to have stayed with them that night, because the first effect of such intelligence was always "so upsetting," as she phrased it; and besides, with her warmer recognition of the calamities of others, she felt that it was just the moment to add the friend to the doctor, and to do more than was asked. Wendell saw the truth of this, but not so clearly as when he was called from his bed that night to visit his patient, who had become increasingly feverish, and had insisted on having the doctor at once. Then Wendell offered to sleep at the house, until the major grew better, and his offer being gladly accepted, arrangements were made to send the carriage for him every night about ten o'clock.

The constant and familiar intercourse with the Mortons, into which the doctor was thus thrown, became of great use to him. It gentled him, as the old English word has it; and with the natural quickness of an American, he saw and assimilated a good deal of what was most akin to his tastes, which tended towards easy acceptance of whatever was pleasant or graceful. Moreover, all of these

people interested him, and were some of them as novel to his former social experiences as would have been the flora of another planet to his botanical knowledge.

The Mortons, like many other of the older Pennsylvania families, had once, in very early colonial times, been Quakers, or, as they even yet preferred to say, "Friends." They had, however, long since deserted the following of Penn, or, what was more probable, had in stricter days been cut off from the society for breaches of discipline, and were now, and had long been, "world's people" to other Mortons, their kinsfolk, who came to the house at times, and were as well satisfied with their ancestry as with the polish of their old plate, or the ineffable silk of their marvelous bonnets. There came also many visitors representing staid families who had lived since Penn's settlement in or near the old borough of Germantown, and who had the distinctiveness and individuality of people long hedged about by unchanging circumstances. Their young folks mostly slipped away to the calmly growing city, or went to New York, and were then interiorly and vaguely regarded by aged aunts as lost souls. Those who remained in the ancient homesteads, and lived and died adhesive to the soil, held a certain distinct social place and position, passively yielded rather than demanded. It was not always easy to see why a few of these breeds had won early in colonial life, and held so steadily, their places on the upper levels of society. It may have been sometimes

because of the general possession of shrewdness and business capacity, the cumulative quality, or that, among numberless commonplace people of their race, each generation produced one or two who rose to distinction, and thus illustrated a name and sustained its influence.

The little straggling town, with its long main street and outlying lanes, was full of such people as these; whilst also there were frequent visitors from the city, relatives or friends of the Mortons, — quiet Philadelphians, with set ways, and seemingly as much alike as their marble doorsteps, yet ready with an odd fund of undeveloped enterprise for emergencies, if they were sufficiently important.

To many of these people Wendell was more or less an interesting person, as a new comer and the attendant of a man of social importance and of large fortune, and found this position by no means unpleasant. He amused Morton, who liked people to talk for him, and who himself never talked more than he could help; so that, had it not been for the occasional breakdowns in his patient's case, his doctor would have felt, on the whole, that his own life was becoming more and more easy and agreeable.

All this while the war was moving on, and of its fortunes and their influences the little village had their share. There were families whom it tore asunder, and others whom it doomed to mourn their noblest. There were those of the Society of Friends who looked on it as wrong, from beginning

to end, but who expended time and money on hospitals and the wounded; while now and then some resolute young fellow, like the famous Free Quakers of the Revolutionary War, would defy the society and the overseers, and go off to the front. These gallant backsliders from the creed of Penn and Barclay generally made themselves heard of in the struggle, and helped to make up a healthy average of active pugnacity for many a kindly, quiet stock which had struck no blow in anger for a century and a half. Out of it all came an increase of life, a freshening of national vitality, which was felt most in the centres of population, and which, stirring all social classes, developed for good or ill whatever there was susceptible of outgrowth alike in old and young. Certainly, no period in the history of our race was ever more interesting.

"I am eighteen, and over," said Arthur Morton; "and next year, by George, I 'd like to see what will keep me out of this war! I am so big now, I 'm ashamed to have a girl look at me in the street, and I always feel sure that she is saying, 'There 's a fellow who ought to be at the front.'"

"Bother, Arty! I don't believe they think of you at all," said the elder brother.

"Well, perhaps not; but I think of myself."

"Oh, doubtless."

"Come, Ned, don't chaff me about this. When a Quaker like Fox thinks it his duty to go" —

"Must be an awful let-up to a Quaker," replied Edward. "But look here, old man," he went on, as he bent over the table, sketching fancy heads on the margins of a morning paper: "there are two sides to this question; and after all, you could n't go now, the way father is. I am of less and less use every day. Don't talk about it to mother; and if you are down about it, Arty, just think what I must be. Think what I must be!"

"That won't help me," said the boy. "Because you can't go is no reason why I should not. In fact, that is an additional reason why I ought to go. But I suppose there is no use in talking about it now!"

"No, there is no use. And I say, old man, don't talk to me about it any more; not till you must, anyhow! Damn it, Art — I — I can't stand it! I hate books. I never read any. I detest this quiet, humdrum life of our great towns. I love a horse and a gun, and — and — Arty, I shall never have them any more, — never!" he repeated, throwing down his pencil.

"Yes, you will, Ned; I am sure you will."

"Then you are sure without cause. This war will be over, and I shall have struck no blow in it; and Arty, don't you go to thinking it romantic, but when I look ahead, and know how all the man in me is going to shrivel up by degrees, and that — oh, brother, I might have ridden with Custer, and died man-like in some wild rush of battle! Oh, by George, old fellow, I am just like a fish on dry

land. I think I begin to understand what Mrs. Westerley meant, last week, when she said that there was a certain completeness of calamity that approached the ludicrous. However, I can tell you one thing: you will never hear me complain again. I have said my say. A fellow must have his growl out to somebody."

"I would stay at home, if I could make it so you could go," said Arthur, who had a boy's admiration of the elder brother. "I wish they had some fellows like you in command of that Potomac army."

"Pshaw! I can't command myself, even, as you may see. Don't spread yourself on me as a hero, and above all not a word to mother. Does n't it seem, sometimes, as if life were one great muddle, 'Arty? Give me my stick. Here 's the doctor and Mrs. Westerley, and there comes Mr. Wilmington up the road. What a covey of queer birds!"

After the doctor had gone upstairs, the young men went out to the porch to join Mrs. Westerley, when Mr. Wilmington rode up on his tall sorrel thoroughbred, which not many people cared to mount.

The slightly built old gentleman, with an uncommonly red face and a nose inclined to purple, was on his feet in an instant, and bowing over the widow's hand in an antiquated and formal fashion. He immensely admired her when she was present, and entirely disapproved of her when she was absent.

"Charmed to see you, Mrs. Westerley," he said, raising his large gray eyes, with something quaintly solemn in their gaze.

"And how are your nieces?" she asked.

"Very well, thank you."

"And is there any afternoon news?"

"None, I believe. But as Mr. Addison says, 'The steps of time,' — Bother! I wish Susie were here! She always knows what it is — As Mr. Addison" —

"Yes, about Robinson Crusoe, and the footsteps on the sands of time," said the widow, viciously, while the two lads exchanged a surreptitious smile of amusement.

"No," ejaculated Wilmington calmly, "that is n't it! How is your father, boys?"

"Much the same, sir. He wants to see you when the doctor goes."

"Well, I will wait."

"What a lovely day!" said Mrs. Westerley.

"Yes, the day seems quite lovely," assented Wilmington.

"But we want rain."

"Yes, we want rain very much."

"Our wells are nearly dry" —

"Indeed, mine is quite dry."

"But luckily weather does not affect wine, at all, I am told; at least, not madeira."

"No, I don't think weather affects wine, but the moon does."

"And when are you coming over to taste my ma-

deira, Mr. Wilmington? I am told it is good; but Major Morton said, last spring, that it needed care, — like myself, he was kind enough to add. Come to-morrow, and take care of some of it for me. You know that when we are out of town we dine at three. I don't want to make a big dinner while the major is ill, but I will ask Doctor Wendell, — I want to ask him. And, Edward, I suppose you won't care to come?"

"No. Mother 's all the time urging me to leave the house, but I can't do it; I really cannot."

"Well, then, I must find some one else. Shall it be to-morrow, Mr. Wilmington?"

"Nothing could give me greater pleasure," said the old gentleman. "At three to-morrow, madam. At three, you said?"

Wendell also received his invitation; and when the widow added, "You know they are quite informal, — our summer dinings. Don't put on a dress-coat," he thanked her, and went away pleased and a trifle puzzled. To be told what he was to wear struck him as comical.

"I will walk with you," said Edward, "if you are not in a hurry, and will give me your arm."

"How are you doing?" asked the doctor, as they moved away.

"I am worse, doctor. I walk badly, and I try in vain to hide it from mother." Then pausing a moment, he added, "Shall I go down hill rapidly? You may be sure that I am fully prepared to hear the worst you can tell me; and frankly, I would

rather know what I have to expect. Just answer me two or three questions, will you?"

"If you really wish it."

"Yes, I do wish it. Shall I lose all use of my legs?"

"No, I think not."

"Will my head suffer? Shall I lose my mind? That 's not — or at least it was not — as good as my legs; but still, when it is all there is left" —

"No; that does n't often happen in these troubles."

"Then I shall still be of a little use at home, and no worse off than some ugly girl whom no one wants to marry!" After a pause he again spoke: "There is, I suppose, not the faintest chance that I shall ever be well enough to sit a horse?"

"Hardly, I think; but while there is life there is hope."

Wendell was ashamed of this stupid commonplace of consolation, but in truth he did not know what to say.

"And to think of all the healthy-legged idiots who can go to the front, and are dawdling about Newport and Saratoga! Oh, doctor — By Heaven, but it 's hard!"

"Yes," replied Wendell, "it is hard," and walked in silence. He felt in a vague way for the lad, but did not know what to say. He tried to put himself, mentally, in this young fellow's place, but neither his experience nor his intelligence suggested to him just what he ought to say; for although a

dreamily imaginative man, he was possessed of none of that realistic, half-dramatic faculty, which in its highest developments and united with tenderness constitutes the genius of sympathy. With all his love of poetry and of nature, he lacked this precious gift.

"Yes, it is hard, — it is very hard," he continued, after a pause; and so saying, regretted the distinctness with which he had answered the young man's straightforward queries. He had left himself none of the usual vaguely consolatory doubts on which the over-questioned doctor is apt to fall back.

"I did n't expect you to say anything to comfort me," said Edward. "What I really wanted was the truth."

"You asked me to be frank," returned Wendell, who did not easily recognize a direct nature, and was apt to search his index of human motives under other than the obvious headings for what was plainly to be read on the page before him, and who fancied no one could want a cruel truth set before him in its nakedness. Had he been a true woman, he would have been touched by the manliness and moral courage of the young fellow's questions. Had he been a more masculine man, he would have met them with sympathetic appreciation.

"Yes," repeated Edward, "I asked you to be frank, and I am really very thankful, sir, that you have told me everything. It must be hard for a doctor to do this," said the lad, with a slight tremor

about his lips, and with a strange and thoughtful gentleness, "and perhaps I ought to have saved you the annoyance of telling me. In fact, I did think of writing; but it came out, somehow, just now, in spite of my not being quite ready. On the whole, it is just as well."

"I thought so, poor boy! He did not really want the truth," said Wendell to himself; not seeing how much the lad had considered the doctor's embarrassing share in the matter, nor how completely he had overrated the doctor's sympathetic reluctance to be unpleasantly outspoken.

There are delicate overtones of unselfishness which belong only to the purest and sweetest natures refined by the truest good-breeding. They are of the very poetry of social conduct. The lad was full of them; but Wendell unfortunately was one whose sensibility to moral harmonies failed of hearing-power for these higher notes of the gamut of character.

He answered young Morton with a few phrases of ordinary consolation, to which the latter made no reply, save to drop now and then a simple affirmative. In fact, he was lost to the passing moments, and was sadly looking back upon a world of action, and forward to a world of passive inactivity. Then he suddenly set these thoughts aside for a calmer hour, and, stopping, put out his hand.

"You have been a good friend to me," he said. "Do watch my father well, and keep an eye on mother, too. So far she bears her troubles admira-

bly; but what with father's state and my own miserable bothers, it would n't surprise me to see her break down."

"Her power of endurance is certainly remarkable," returned Wendell. "Indeed, I was surprised, yesterday, to see how she could turn aside from it all. When I came downstairs, after seeing your father alone, I found her quite amused over Hester's comments on those queer plant caricatures of Grandville."

"Yet," said Edward, "my mother is not very fond of young girls. But I think Hester really delights her. You do not know that years and years ago we lost a little sister, and that ever since then mother has seemed to take no interest at all in girls. It is a thing I never could quite understand. I have seen her put herself out of the way to avoid talking to them, or being long with them. But she appears to take to Hester in a way I cannot see through — I don't mean — what I mean is that the girl is so gay, and alive, and full of childish surprises, of odd ideas, that any one must like her; but mother, in my memory, has never shown any pleasure in a little girl. I say all this, doctor, because it may make you feel that Hester is a good person to have in our house."

"Thanks," said Wendell. "I have sometimes hesitated" —

"Well, don't, then! She will always be welcome, — as welcome as you; and that is saying a

good deal. Good-night, doctor, and once again, thank you."

"Shall I give you my arm back to the house?"

"Oh, no," replied Edward, laughing. "I shall hobble along slowly. Good-night."

VIII.

Ezra Wendell was gratified at the prospect of dining with Mrs. Westerley, and not less that Mr. Wilmington was to be of the party. He knew that the old gentleman was something of a force in the Morton household, and a man socially well considered everywhere; and the doctor over-estimated such influences, as people are apt to over-estimate the values, social or other, of taciturn persons. Then also Mrs. Morton, who had now taken Wendell's fortunes in charge, had told him that Mr. Wilmington had spoken about consulting him in regard to his gout. The doctor was pleased, too, because Morton was somewhat better in the morning; so that altogether his sensitiveness of temperament was agreeably dealt with by events, and he went with more than usual cheerfulness through his day's work, trying to suppress the feeling that there was anything unusual in the matter of dining with a handsome and sprightly woman.

Mrs. Westerley was a lady by no means given to half measures. She had for the present "lost her heart to these utterly unconventional people, my dear." It was a question how long the loss would continue, but at the time we speak of she had socially adopted the doctor, and meant not only that

he should succeed medically, but also that the little aristocracy of the neighborhood should accept him in social relations. All men interested Mrs. Westerley, and this one was to her a quite novel, and therefore a valuable, variety of the genus homo. Moreover, just at present she was somewhat bored, which, to do her justice, was rare, since, as a rule, her means of amusement were as varied as the hours allowed. She had married young, and within a year had lost her husband by an accident. She had mourned him in due fashion, and then had abruptly laid aside her widow's weeds, and crossed the ocean, to become a favorite in pleasant circles, and to return, after several winters, the same gay, light-hearted woman as before. What lay beneath this joyous masquerade only one woman — Mrs. Morton — knew, and the daws believed that Alice Westerley had no heart to wear upon her sleeve.

At present, she was bent upon attracting as well as helping the new doctor, and she was hardly less inclined to please his sister, as, like some few women, she enjoyed, next to her male conquests, those of her own sex. Of Miss Wendell, she as yet knew nothing, except that Mrs. Morton described her as a "very nice, plain kind of person, who does n't wear cuffs, and who, of all women, could not possibly interest you, my dear."

Nevertheless, Mrs. Westerley ordered her ponies at eleven o'clock, and, with a critical look at groom and harness, she set off on a round of errands, with the intention of calling last upon Miss Wendell.

Presently, as she drove down the main street, she pulled up suddenly, with an abruptness to which her ponies were not altogether unused.

"Mr. Fox!" she cried, "Mr. Fox!" An erect, broadly-built man, of more than middle height, clean-shaven and of fair color, approached her carriage. "I should have called you 'colonel,'" she said. "I heard you were at home on leave. Come and dine with me at three. As to my human *ménu*, there is a clever doctor for my piece of resistance, and old Wilmington, and myself."

The colonel was in undress uniform, and said quietly, "Yes, I would like it; but may I go away early? And, by the way, I have n't the sign of a civilized dress, only my police uniform," and he looked round at his shoulder-straps, smiling.

"As to uniform," she replied, "I will try to bear it. I am an awful copperhead, you know. But we dine at three, as we always do in summer. As to going away early, you may; but I am sure you won't. And I forgot to say that I have some tremendous madeira."

The colonel's brown eyes lifted. "I will come, even at the risk of storing up awful retributive memories for days in camp, when the fare is beans and bacon."

"Three o'clock, then. Good-by," and she drove away. "Gracious," she exclaimed, "what an escape! If I had had to leave my doctor to talk madeira with Wilmington! What nice eyes the man has!"

Her errands done, the ponies drew up beneath the lindens in front of Dr. Wendell's house. There was no need to ring. Hester Gray was sitting on the stoop at the door, in the warm October sunshine, surrounded by a queer little museum of miscellaneous objects, over which the widow's eyes passed, amazed. There were two glass preserving-jars, with a spray or two of leaves in each, on which some green and gold caterpillars were patiently browsing. In the girl's lap were a large land turtle and several square paper boxes, as well as an open blank book, in which she was pasting very neatly a brilliant collection of autumn leaves. She looked up pleasantly, and setting aside her work rose to her feet.

"Why, Hester, what is all this?" asked Mrs. Westerley.

"I just brought out my caterpillars to have some sun," the girl replied. "Dr. Wendell says they like it, and this one is making a cocoon. Shall I take out the big green one?"

"Oh, dear, no!" returned the widow; "it might disturb him. And what is that curious beast doing, on his hind legs? I really think he must be saying his prayers."

"Not he!" cried Hester, laughing. "And do you want to see my leaves, Mrs. Westerley?"

"Not now, my dear. Run and tell your aunt I am here."

"Aunt? Oh, you know she is not my aunt," returned Hester, tranquilly.

"Of course, I know. I mean Miss Wendell."

"Yes." And carefully setting aside her menagerie, the child said, "Please to come in. I will call Miss Ann."

Mrs. Westerley entered the parlor, and, wandering about, took a pleased survey of its appearance. "I wonder," she said to herself, "where that Delft bowl came from. The mark is good," she added, examining it critically. "And the books," she exclaimed, with renewed curiosity, turning to the table, — "what a droll assortment! Swedenborg, Divine Love and Wisdom, Browning, Hakewill's Apologia, — gracious heavens, does any one read a book that big? — Ford's plays, Edwards on the Will, Quarles' Emblems. I should like to know who reads which, as Arty says."

"Oh, Miss Wendell," she exclaimed, turning to greet Ann with one of her most charming smiles, "how pleasant to find you at home!"

"Will you sit down?" said Ann, composedly. "My brother told me that you were coming to see me. I am sure you are very kind. It is quite neighborly."

"Of course I should come. What a lovely room you have! So much color! You must have studied the effects a good deal."

"I am afraid," rejoined Ann, "that I don't think much of the colors. If I can only keep it clean, I am more than satisfied."

"But one of you must think a good deal about matters of taste. That Bartolozzi is not only beautiful, but it is a proof and very rare."

"My brother Ezra is responsible for these small extravagances. He says that they make life easier; but when I have to dust them, — and I assure you that is very often, — I know he is mistaken in that view of them. If he were the housekeeper, he would find that so many little things make life a good deal harder! I don't mean it is a matter really to make a fuss over."

This candid expression of domestic difficulties amused and puzzled the widow a little, but she replied, "Indeed, I have much the same troubles, and servants do break things. Don't you find that they break things?"

"No," said Ann, simply. "I do all the dusting myself, and I am careful, very careful, because brother values all these prints and bits of china."

"And how beautiful and charming they are! I was looking at that bowl on the mantel, before you came down. It is Delft, and very good Delft."

"Yes, that is one of the few things from home. I believe it came to Scituate in the Speedwell. My brother says that it belonged to an ancestress of ours, a Mistress Elizabeth Blossom. There is something about her and her father in a book we have. I think they came over in 1640. How far away it seems! And now this bowl is all there is left on earth to remember her by."

Mrs. Westerley was interested. There was a mild flavor of gentility in this ancient Pilgrim breed, keeping, in its insignificant existence on the shores of Cape Cod, some pride of long descent.

"And you are proud," said the widow, "of your stern Puritan blood. I think I should be."

"Oh, but we were not Puritans," returned Ann; "we were Pilgrims, you know. There is a great difference."

Mrs. Westerley did not know, but she put the matter aside for future reference, saying, —

"Of course, — yes, of course. But do you know, your brother does n't seem to me like a New Englander?"

"Does n't he? I never thought of it at all, myself. Why does n't he?"

"Well, really, I could hardly say, but he does not." She had in her own mind an idea that there was about Wendell a certain softness of manner which was Southern in its character; but this was not quite the thing she desired to say, and so she added, "He talks more like a Marylander, I think."

"I don't know that I ever was called on to notice that, but it may be that he does."

"Have you heard him say to-day what he thinks of Major Morton?"

"No; I have not seen him since his morning visit."

"I think you would feel pleased if you could hear how the Mortons speak of him. He has been so good, and so gentle with the major; and perhaps you have little idea of that man's irritability! Indeed, I can't understand how any one could get on with him as your brother does. He must have a perfect temper."

Ann's face flushed with honest delight. "No one," she said, "knows how good he is." Then her heart opened to this woman who so intelligently appreciated the brother. "It is such a pleasure for me to feel that he is living where he has a chance to show what he is; and you know I could n't expect every one to feel just as I do about him."

"But you see you were wrong," returned Mrs. Westerley; and then, knowing that she had perhaps dwelt quite enough on Dr. Wendell, she added, "And how good he is to the child! It must be rather a grave business to have a girl suddenly left on your hands. Let me say, once for all, that if in any way I can help you about Hester, you must come to me without hesitation. Will you, now?" and she took Ann Wendell's hand.

"Yes, I will, if there be any need."

"And you won't forget? I really mean it."

"No, I will do as you say;" on which Mrs. Westerley rose, feeling that she had achieved the purpose of her visit, and went out to her ponies, with a kiss from the child, who was still at the open door with her pets in the sunshine.

Mrs. Alice Westerley lived in a modern house on one of the lanes which border the battlefield of Germantown, and her windows looked over the ancient burial-ground, where sleep side by side the heroes of that indecisive day. A few old hemlocks and spruces, and one or two tulip-poplars, were

grouped about the grounds, which were only a few acres in extent; but the profusion of vines, now splendid in autumn colors, gave a distinct character to what would otherwise have been but one of numberless modern villas, in no other respect very unlike. Within, it remained very much as it was when she bought it, except that it had acquired that peculiar look of easy comfort and of being lived in which some women have the art of diffusing through any dwelling they may choose to inhabit.

Wendell arrived exactly at the hour, and found himself alone with Colonel Fox, the widow being a little late, as was apt to be the case. Fox looked at him with brief attention. He had heard something of him before, and what he had heard was not altogether to his liking; yet despite his preconceptions, the doctor's face pleased him.

"Dr. Wendell, I think," said he. "I am Thomas Fox, — Colonel Fox, I suppose I should say; but we Friends cling by mere habit to the ways in which we were brought up."

"I like them," returned Wendell; "but it must be rare to see people of your creed in the army."

"Yes, it is rare," rejoined the colonel, simply. "I am glad our being both so early gives me a chance to ask you about Morton. Is he really very ill?"

"I would have said so until quite lately; but now I feel less uneasy."

"I am glad to hear it, and on such good author-

ity. He made an admirable soldier. Do you see any likeness to him in the picture above you, — the one on the left? It is Mrs. Westerley's great-grandfather. Morton and she are distantly related."

"Indeed," said Wendell, "one would hardly suspect it. The major is such a wreck that I did not know the photograph taken two years ago. Pain is a relentless sculptor. But what a fine picture! I see some resemblance in the way the head is carried."

"It is a Copley, and the two over the table are Stuarts, and that on the left is by the elder Peale. It was hardly fair to hang it near the Stuarts. If you like good portraits, as I do, you will fancy these, I am sure. Just see how the hands are painted, in the Copley!"

"Yes," assented Wendell. "There is character in the way the old fellow grips his sword-hilt."

"They say he was only too ready with it," remarked Fox.

"I can believe that," said Wendell, smiling. "But really, we are as unlike these people as we are unlike the English of to-day."

"Yes," returned Fox. "That is true to some extent. You must go farther back for the best type of American face. I should say we are more like the English of Charles the First's time. In fact, the old Vandyke face has crossed the seas. You don't see it in England. You do see it with us. But here comes Mrs. Westerley!"

"And of course," said the widow, "you were saying that women never are punctual. Upon my

word, the other world will be a great comfort to people like myself. Where time does not exist, punctuality will cease to be a virtue."

"Mr. Wilmington, at last," she added, as he entered.

It was a pleasant dinner to the doctor. The quick, alert chat of the hostess, trained in many varied circles, and knowing how to call out whatever there was of good talk in her guests; the reserved, tranquil, old-fashioned ways of Wilmington, with his long silences and occasional bits of sarcasm; and the grave intelligence of the Quaker colonel, made up a social atmosphere in which Wendell felt that he was appreciated and at his ease. Had he been a keener or more accustomed observer, he would perhaps have noted the momentary attention with which the colonel's brown eyes dwelt furtively, at odd moments, now upon him, and now upon Mrs. Westerley's mobile face; but he was too busy with the happiness of a rare social hour to search for what lay beneath. Whether the quick-witted woman herself observed it was quite another matter. Few things escaped her.

There was first the news of the neighborhood, and then the ever-recurrent talk of the war.

"Do you look for anything from Pope's advance?" asked Mrs. Westerley.

"You won't tell," replied the colonel, smiling, "if I say I do not. He is too confident, and like most of our generals underrates his foe, I think. Lee is not a general to be underrated, and never so

little as when beaten. I don't like these cats in a corner. We shall have to make up our minds to lose man for man until we, who are numerically better off, have enough men left to win with."

"Did thee ever play poker very much, Fox?" inquired Mr. Wilmington without looking up from his plate. Like many of the descendants of Friends, he was apt to talk to those still of the society in Friends' language.

The soldier looked up at Mrs. Westerley, and replied demurely, "I have some dim memory of having heard it described when I was — well, rather young; but as a rule, thee knows it is not largely cultivated in Twelfth Street meeting."

"Well," continued the old gentleman, still pecking at the minutest amount of dinner on which life could be sustained, — "well, when thee gets some one in command who can play poker, I think Mr. Lee will have to go home and go to work."

"How much better," said Wendell, gayly, "to have a competitive examination on poker, open to grays and blues, and accept the result as ending the war. General Lee" —

"Pardon me, doctor, *Mr.* Lee," said Wilmington, gravely.

Wendell did not care much whether Robert Lee was given his titular rank or not, and on the whole hated war talk; but he returned, smiling, "Thanks! Mr. Lee will be beaten, as Colonel Fox said, when we make up our minds to lose enough men in drawn battles to leave us at last with more men than he can meet."

"Well," said Wilmington, tranquilly, "that is poker."

"The illustration is faultless," laughed Fox, "but it is n't war."

"No," answered Wendell; "but it is the only war a race like ours can wage, when it is fighting against itself."

"Do you have all these theories in camp, colonel?" asked the widow.

"Oh, enough, and too many of them; less now than we had. But camp life is monotonous, and even Mr. Wilmington's educational resource gets played out, literally I may say, at times."

"Do you remember," said Wendell, "what one of Marlborough's generals told the London alderman when he asked if fighting was n't hard work?"

"No," replied Fox. "What was it?"

"The general declared it was n't very hard, because they fought every morning, and had all the rest of the day to themselves."

"Delightful!" cried Mrs. Westerley. Her doctor was clearly coming on.

"Who can help wondering," said the colonel, "what the alderman answered!"

"That is the defect of most good stories," replied Wendell.

"I wish that general could regulate our little affair," returned Fox. "It is one day's fighting and six weeks of chasséing east and west. Still, it can end only one way, and it would n't be worth while betting on as a matter of chance."

"I rather think we have all bet pretty heavily," said Wilmington. "I 've bet a good deal before in my day, but this time I bet more than I liked."

"Indeed?" exclaimed Wendell, with indiscretion, and rather astonished.

Wilmington looked up, with a little of the tremulousness of age in his face. "My boy Jack," he said. Then he looked down at his plate, and there was a brief but perceptible silence, which the widow broke.

"Few have bet more heavily, — few, indeed. I should never have had the courage to bet anything as nice as my friend Jack Wilmington."

Wilmington looked up at her with a faint smile of pleasure. He smiled often, but never laughed.

"What I fear most," said Wendell, "is that when we have conquered the South we shall have an endless guerrilla warfare."

"Oh, no, no," replied Fox; "the American common sense will stop that. I don't fear guerrilla warfare. The negroes will be the great question."

"Yes," assented Mrs. Westerley. "It is hideous to think of. One can't but pity the South."

"They should have thought of that before," muttered Wilmington.

"Unluckily," said Wendell, "it will be quite as much our business as theirs."

"Yes, exactly," answered the hostess. "Oh, there is one of those horrid news-boys! 'Great battle on the Potomac,' of course. Shall I send for a paper?"

"No, don't, my dear Mrs. Westerley," exclaimed Wilmington. "I try to think as little as I can of it all. In fact, I read the papers but once a week, — on Sunday."

"I wish," said Fox, "that all the editors could be sent to the front."

"With all my heart," returned the widow; "and no doubt you would send the copperheads to reinforce Lee, and so give me a chance of seeing it all."

"No indeed! A brigade of Mrs. Westerleys at the rebel front would be fatal," cried Fox, laughing.

"I should desert, or malinger, — is n't that what you call shamming sick?" she rejoined. "Gettysburg was quite near enough for me. I was in New York, and do you know my man John buried all the silver; and to this day, if I complain of its want of polish, he puts on an injured air, and says it was 'all along of them rebels, ma'am.' I suppose the excuse will last my time and his!"

"I heard," said old Wilmington, wickedly, "that you meant to make Mr. Lee's visit an excuse to stay in New York."

"Now, that is one of Helen Morton's calumnies! I know by my own experience — I mean that I know of myself — how little one's friends are to be trusted! However, I have one consolation: I think I have abused her quite enough in the past to leave me with a good balance in my favor."

"But no one believes your abuse," asserted the colonel.

"And it was n't true, then?" asked Wilmington, peering under his lazy eyelids with a sense of mild disapproval at the very comfortable dinner the Quaker colonel was making.

"I did not say it was n't true," retorted Mrs. Westerley, "and New York always is a temptation to me."

"Then why do you stay here?" said Wendell. "To be able to go where you will, and to live where you wish to live, seems to me the most desirable of human liberties."

"Why do I live here? Oh, because I am better here."

"Morally better?" asked the colonel.

"I decline to be catechised!" she returned. "If I were as good as Mr. Wilmington," she continued, with malice in her eyes, "I would n't have to escape temptation by change of residence."

"I knew my time would come," murmured that little old gentleman, remembering with sly satisfaction that he had been rather agreeably naughty in his time, in many localities.

"As to Gettysburg," she resumed, "you were all of you badly enough scared, men and women. For my part, I never believed Lee would get to Philadelphia, — never!"

"And why?" said Wilmington, tumbling into her trap.

"Why?" she continued. "Because, my dear Mr. Wilmington, nothing unusual ever happens in Philadelphia; and that would have been very un-

usual, therefore it could not happen. Is n't that what you call a syllogism, Dr. Wendell?"

Every one laughed, and Wilmington exclaimed, "You always were cross about Philadelphia."

"No, no," she said, "I like it, and it suits me; but now and then I do incline to go somewhere else, just, you know, to recover a little my belief in the possibility of the unexpected."

"Oh, that is too outrageous!" laughed Fox. "As to New York, it is a pleasant casino, supported by stock gambling."

"And is it true, Mrs. Westerley," said Wilmington, "that you told Morton that bad New Yorkers, when they die, go to Philadelphia."

"I!" retorted the widow, "Impossible! Somebody in Boston said something like that about Paris. But I always am maligned."

"I wish I had said it," returned Fox.

"And did it take you long to think of it?" inquired the old gentleman.

"Oh, really," complained the widow, "I see it is full time for me to leave you. I was never so abused in my life!" and while speaking she arose, saying to Mr. Wilmington, as the old gentleman, bowing low, held the door open, "You will take my place, please; and there are, I think, some madeiras you may like. At least, I have done my best for you! John, the cigars are in the sideboard. I will give you your coffee in the drawing-room."

Then Mr. Wilmington shifted his seat to the

place she had left, and the servant put in front of him, on silver coasters, four or five tall, slender, antique decanters.

The old gentleman, with his head on one side, looked through massive gold eyeglasses at the silver labels, and very deliberately rearranging the bottles, filled his glass, and passed the wine to Wendell. "With the sun, if you please," he said. "A little cold, John, this wine," upon which, to Wendell's amazement, he clasped the wine-glass in both hands, and shut his eyes with a tranquil expression of such utter satisfaction at the coming pleasure, and with so much of a look of devotion, that the doctor conceived for a moment the idea that nothing less than a thankful prayer for a good dinner could be in the old man's mind; but presently he drank off his wine, and remarked, "A good grape juice. '28, I think. I did n't suppose there was any of it left."

Wendell certainly found it good.

The second wine was dismissed with, "I would n't advise you to take that. It wants a good fining, Colonel Fox."

The colonel was of like opinion.

"There is no label on this; but women take no care of their wines. Hem," he said, as he set down his glass, "I remember that wine well. It is precisely my own age. It 's getting just a little shaky, like myself; it is smoke! No better wine, Dr. Wendell; do you know it?"

"I can't say that I do," said Wendell, rather puzzled at the appellation. "I know little or nothing of wines."

"Well," remarked Fox, "Mr. Wilmington is a good instructor. I advise you to begin your education."

"But what on earth is smoke?" asked the doctor.

"Don't you taste it?" returned Wilmington. "There is no better madeira. I don't know many as good. A little eggshell would help it."

"Yes, a little eggshell," repeated Fox, with equal gravity.

"I am glad you still like it," exclaimed the old gentleman; "the taste is going out. I don't know five lads who can tell sherry from a fine madeira. My Jack says he likes cider. 'Likes cider,' — good heavens! Will you take another glass, doctor, or a cigar?"

"Unless you want to be excommunicated vinously," said Fox, laughing, "you can't drink after you smoke;" and so the cigars were brought and there was more war talk, during which Fox slipped away to chat with Mrs. Westerley, and the doctor was left alone with Mr. Wilmington.

Wendell very soon found that any discussion which did not involve wine talk was, at this stage of the dinner, quite out of the question, and he therefore wisely yielded, and as a consequence rose many degrees in the old gentleman's favor. What he learned as to wines it is perhaps not worth while to inquire. "And when I say wines," said Mr. Wilmington, "I mean madeiras, sir. There are other drinks; but excepting now and then a rare

claret, — a very rare claret, — there are no wines except madeira. None, sir!" said the old gentleman, with unusual warmth, — "none, sir!"

He talked of wines as people talk of other people, of their vices or virtues, their births and decays. His dinners were gossips about wines. Such was the fashion of his day, and he and a very few old friends held to it with the tenacity of age. The friends were dropping fast, but the wines remained, and through them more than in any other way were aroused his pleasantest memories of departed feasts and the comrades at whom he had smiled above some golden south side vintage, in days when manners were more courtly and healths were drunk.

At last, when Wendell timidly remarked that all this care about wines must take up a good deal of time, Mr. Wilmington said, "Yes. It was quite true; they were like women and needed a good deal of attention, and that was just why Morton's wines had all gone to the devil. And a very pretty cellar he might have had, too, if he had only looked after it."

Sunday afternoon, he added, he himself had found a good quiet time to see to his madeiras; and, as Wendell learned later, any Sunday the old gentleman was to be found in his wine garret, contemplative and surrounded by demijohns, and eggshells, and what not.

At last, in despair, Wendell suggested that, as the afternoon was wearing on, they might as well

have their coffee; upon which Mr. Wilmington reluctantly finished his glass, saying, "Well, I shall get you to dine with me, when Morton mends. I would like you to taste my pale heriot. That is very high up, sir, — very high up."

Just before they joined Mrs. Westerley, the colonel had said, "I do not believe you were really afraid."

"No, I was not afraid. I suppose I am like your raw recruits: want of experience makes them courageous. I can't realize the horrors of war. Were you ever afraid, Colonel Fox? A stupid question, I suppose; but were you ever, now, really?"

"Yes," he replied softly, "once or twice — of you."

The widow flushed a little, and was glad as she heard the coming steps of her other guests.

"I mean — you know what I mean, in war," she said.

"Yes," he answered, quietly, "I have been so afraid, Mrs. Westerley, I have prayed God to help me."

"Oh," she murmured, under her breath, "you are a brave man to say it."

"There are things a man will say to a woman — to some women — which he will say to no man," he rejoined.

"And you go back to-morrow?" she exclaimed, hastily.

"Yes."

At this moment Mr. Wilmington and Wendell

entered the room. "Oh, at last, doctor!" she said, "I thought you were never coming. Won't you ring that bell in the corner? But here is John, already! Coffee, John, if you please."

IX.

Then came the mild days of the Indian summer, and to the surprise of every one Colonel Morton continued to improve, and was at last sitting up and riding out, to the great triumph of his doctor and the endless happiness of Ann Wendell. The doctor was also prospering otherwise, and seemed on the tide which leads to fortune those who know how to take it.

With her husband's gain in health there came back to Mrs. Morton her old habits of outside activity. To him she was always compliant, quietly yielding, remembering his wants and ways; in fact, quite too much prone to forget herself, and to exact from all others of her household a like self-effacement, where he was concerned. Years before, she had fought her battle for such individual freedom of thought and action as should belong to every woman, and had lost it, — lost it, with the repeatedly acquired conviction that there was for herself and all who were dear to her less sacrifice in losing than in winning. Perhaps she was right; more probably, as Alice Westerley thought, she was altogether wrong. The widow detested but endured Colonel Morton, and it was quite characteristic of her that, despite her almost indomitable tendency

to jest with and at everything in life, neither with him, nor with any one whom she did not like, did she ever exhibit herself in her true character.

At New Year's time the doctor was pleased to find with the check for his account a second and much larger one from Mrs. Morton, with a note which made the little household more than happy; but at the same time he began to see clearly that he was to lose, for a season at least, his very profitable patient. The colonel had reached a certain stage in recovery, but did not get beyond it; and Dr. Lagrange and a far higher authority had decided that he must leave home, and avoid the ill-humored weather of the later winter and the spring. He hated the idea; but although he knew well enough that compliance was wise, it was not in the man to yield without an unreasoning struggle.

"And I am to be carried about the world in search of health, Helen!" he exclaimed, when this decree of his advisers was made clear to him. "And where the mischief am I to go to?"

"Dr. Lagrange says the West Indies or Europe," replied Mrs. Morton.

"I don't see why I cannot be let alone."

"You could, my dear, but it would n't be wise. Dr. Lagrange and Dr. Wendell both agree about your going away."

"Confound the doctors! I believe I should have done much better without them."

"Oh, John!"

"And who 's to arrange it all? And how the

deuce is that poor devil of a broken-down Ned to wander all over Europe?"

"We won't wander, John; and I was thinking that perhaps — perhaps Edward might be willing to stay with Dr. Wendell. I have talked to him about it, and I think it might be managed."

"Oh, I suppose so," said her husband. He detested this easy mode of removing the obstacles he was placing in the way.

"A pretty time Ned will have, Helen, with that Puritan old maid and her self-sufficient brother!"

"He has served you well, John. You owe him much."

"Oh, of course, of course! That's his business. I hate all this fuss about doctors. It is so thoroughly feminine."

"Well, John, you shall have it your own way. What would you suggest?"

"Suggest? I have nothing to suggest. It seems to me that I am always the last person to be considered, in this household."

"Well, then, suppose Ned should go to Alice. She would be very glad to have him, I am sure. How would that answer?"

"What, live with that woman! Take care; you shook my knee, Helen."

Then Mrs. Morton said, her eyes filling, despite long years of self-control and her knowledge that a large part of all this evil-mindedness was the effect of illness, "Well, my dear husband, we shall try to make it easy for you; only don't worry me any more."

"Have I worried you?" he asked.

"Yes, you have worried me."

"Arrange it your own way, then; but don't make me discuss these endless questions."

"No, dear."

After this, Mrs. Morton said very little to her husband, and went on, as was her way, with sometimes a rather needless amount of energy, to make her preparations for a long absence from home. There were many talks with Mrs. Westerley and much counsel with Mr. Wilmington, on whose shrewd, quiet good sense Helen Morton greatly depended. Then, as I have said, her broken habits of a life of active thinking and doing for others had again become possible, and as usual, whenever her husband grew better, she began to concern herself anew in the plans and lives of those about her. This had always been her way. To what school her farmer's children went, whether they knew their catechism, what the local sanitary commission had been about in her long absence, and whether this or that dependent wore warm enough underclothing or not, were by no means unimportant matters to Helen Morton. There was a strong flavor of kindliness in all her forth-putting life, but its constant vigilance was sometimes an infliction on the victims of her good offices. She liked her own way, and generally had it, save only as regarded Morton, and, as Alice Westerley said, "She takes her revenge on the rest of us in a system of despotic philanthropy." In fact, nothing but obstinate

resistance ever conquered her combination of sweet-tempered interference and gentle good manners. There was one other rebel of her household, beside her husband; Edward did and said what he liked, his independence being largely due to her own intense and admiring affection, now made yet more patient and tender by his delicate health. She had consulted, in his case, a dozen doctors, and, mother-like, was pleased with none, because none could be found to promise the impossible; so that at last she had given up all further effort, — a conclusion rare enough for her.

"You will kill yourself, Helen, before you leave home," Alice Westerley said to her, one morning. The widow sat in front of a roaring wood fire in Mrs. Morton's sitting-room. Her feet rested on the brass fender, and as she spoke she looked at them, and approved of them. They were pretty feet, and were beautifully shod, and she very well knew that she had not been alone in her appreciation. Mrs. Morton sat at a Chippendale table, covered with papers and account-books.

"No, I like the work," she replied. "It enables me to forget a good deal, which, as I have well learned, dear, it is quite wise to forget. Don't you think it is one of our great miseries that we have no exacting work which we must do, in the way a man's work has to be done?"

"I don't think you need complain of that, Helen! It seems to me that you have quite enough. If you had, or imagined you had, any more, you could not

manage at all. For my part, I hate work! I don't like even to sew, or do fancy work!"

"I do not see how you stand it, Alice!"

"We are pretty much alike as to that. It tires me to look at you. You are never still. I dare say I think as much. In fact, everything in life interests me, but I do not bother myself about other folks' lives, as you do."

"I can't help it."

"I really suppose you can't. How cold it is! The thermometer was at thirty degrees, this morning. I wish I liked cold weather."

"For me it is the best of all tonics. But, good gracious, Alice, why do you wear such thin stockings?"

"To look the nicer, my dear."

"Some day you will die of consumption, if you are not more careful," observed Mrs. Morton, who was given to grim anticipations as to the future of those who despised her counsels. "You never would take advice! Now if you really would consider it, I should like to give you, dear, a very serious piece of advice. You would n't take it, I am sure, or you would laugh at it, which is worse; but that you do at everything."

"Ah, my dear Helen," said Alice, "when one has so soft a heart as I have, some kind of armor is needful for defense, and mirth is mine. I find it very useful. And as to advice, dear, do you ever think that you sometimes may, in your real goodness of heart, give an over-dose of that valuable

drug? I am a little like Arty about that. If you advised me, Helen, as much as you do that sweet boy, I — I don't know what I should do. Do you never hate a clock for so persistently telling you what time it is, — I mean exactly what time it is?"

"How absurd you are, Alice!"

"Perhaps so," assented the widow, who was a little uneasy as to the possible nature of the threatened advice. "But here comes Hester Gray, across the lawn," she added, with a sense of relief.

"Yes; I asked the doctor to let her spend the day with us. How glad the boys will be! I think I never saw a young girl I liked so much. But what a pity it is that she should grow up with that very definite old maid!"

"I rather like Miss Wendell," Mrs. Westerley replied.

"You like anybody a week at a time," returned her friend, laughing, — "anybody!"

"And some, longer, dear."

"Yes; I, at least, have no cause of complaint, Alice," and she patted her affectionately on the knee. "But, Alice, this child troubles me. I think I shall write to her people in the South, and get Mr. Stanton to send the letter through the lines; and yet I cannot expect any answer. She is an orphan. She says that she has no uncles or aunts, and, so far as I can see, is going to be left on the hands of the doctor. I was rather surprised, last week, when Morton asked me what had become of her. He does n't interest himself much in such

waifs, as a rule. I was thinking I might send her to some good school."

"I don't see why you should not. But how on earth are you to attend to it?"

"I thought I might break it to the Wendells, and" —

"Break it!" exclaimed her friend. "What is there to break?"

"Oh, nothing," said Mrs. Morton, "except that Hester really must go to school. I fancy the doctor has grown fond of the child; and as for Miss Wendell, she has a genius for opposition."

Alice Westerley smiled a little. "That is n't rare as a talent, but it does n't often reach to the level of genius! However, if they agree to it, I will arrange the practical part of it after you leave us. I ought to have thought of it myself, I am sure. You see I do not always reject advice. Does Colonel Morton have any feeling still, or did he ever have any, about that poor fellow's charge that he shot him? I was thinking about it yesterday."

"I don't know. John is rather reticent, and it is so hard to be sure what men do think! I should have no reason to suspect that he ever felt it at all except for what I just spoke of, — his interest in the girl. It is unusual for John."

"Has he ever seen her?"

"Two or three times only, I believe, since he has been up and about."

"It would be a droll thing for a man like your husband to entertain any such morbid idea."

"Yes, I think so. But here is Hester;" and so saying, Mrs. Morton raised the long window sash, and the young girl, glowing with the rough buffets of a northwester, came in, and with her a gust of cold, frosty air.

"Oh, Mrs. Morton, it was so hard to walk against the wind! It did blow so!"

Then both ladies kissed the girl, while her bonnet was taken off, and the shapely little head showed, with its coil of yellow hair, fast darkening year by year, above eyes of deep blue, whose size, as yet too great for the face, gave them a look of unnatural attentiveness.

"How you grow, child!" said Mrs. Westerley.

Hester, like most children, had heard this remark before. "Yes," she said; "but Dr. Wendell says that I ought soon to grow sideways, too, and Miss Ann thinks I must have longer gowns. Do you think they are too short, Mrs. Morton? They are awfully in my way now, when I climb trees or coast."

"They are not one bit too short," remarked the widow, cheerfully, wishing she too could go coasting.

"And I think," said Mrs. Morton, "that Miss Ann is quite right. I will speak to her about it."

"Oh, there is Edward!" cried the child,— "and Arthur!"

"I think I should say 'Mr. Edward,'" returned Mrs. Morton. "Don't you remember our talk last week?"

Mrs. Westerley smiled, though she made no comment. The girl replied, "But he said I must call him 'Edward.'"

"You must n't mind what young men say, my dear, and — What do you want, boys?"

"Oh," cried Arthur, "we want Hester to coast! The hills are grand."

"It is very cold."

"Oh, let her come, mother!" exclaimed Edward; and not waiting a reply, he said, "Come along, Hester. I can't coast, but I can look on."

"Well, if you wish it, Ned," said his mother. "Get my fur cloak, and wrap her up well;" and with this the younger pair sped away, Edward slowly and gravely walking after them, a faint sadness in his eyes as he watched their fleet movements. Presently they stopped, and coming back the girl asked Edward, "Don't you think if you put a hand on my shoulder you might go easier? It is very slippery."

The young man smiled, and, doing as she desired, said, "I am like an old man-of-war with two little eager tugs. Did you ever see a picture of the old Téméraire? I feel like the old Téméraire. I will show it to you, Pussy." Then he went on in silence, while the girl's tender eyes turned up to his at times with gentle, womanly consciousness of her helpful strength.

Wendell had builded his opinions about Hester better than he knew, and was right for wrong reasons. He believed, and truly, that the protec-

tion and advice of Mrs. Morton were good for Hester. He was learning that the friendliness of the lads and Colonel Morton's interest were of use to her. Ann Wendell found it hard, as yet impossible, to do more than care for the child's health and lessons. Love, and even liking, grew slowly with her. A few, a finely moulded few, among middle-aged unwedded women have the ready hospitality of affection which comes to many married women as a natural acquisition. Most of all is this true of single women who live much alone, as did Ann Wendell, who felt now, while she accepted her new care, — and a care it was, — that she should at least be left to control it as her conscience advised. Her sense of the child's probable future was definite, as Ann's views usually were, and inclined her to train the girl by endurance for a life of self-sustaining labor. Nor could she see that social sunshine and young companions were necessary to the growth of a nature which had a ready pleasure in all the pleasant things of life, and which would best get from the summer of joy the strength to battle with such wintry storms as life might bring.

The young people went slowly down the garden walks, halting a moment at the sun-dial, which for a century had kept noiseless note of time among the tall, clipped box rows.

"Yes, I should like to see the picture," rejoined Hester, "and I will remind you, — and what is that, Mr. Edward?"

"A sun-dial, Miss Gray. Why on earth should I be 'Edward' and 'Ned' yesterday, and 'Mr. Edward' to-day?"

"Mrs. Morton says I must n't call you 'Edward.'"

"Nonsense! No, I don't mean that. I will speak to mamma about it. I suppose Arty is not promoted."

"What? I don't understand."

"I mean, he is still to be Arty? I can tell you I won't stand that!"

"And did you never see a sun-dial?" exclaimed Arthur.

"No, never; but I have heard of them."

"My grandfather set it here when he came home after the war, and I dare say Washington has seen it, and old mad Anthony Wayne."

"It tells what o'clock it is," said Hester.

"Yes. See! it is twelve now."

"But when the sun is hid, it can't tell then!" cried the girl, triumphantly.

"No," coincided Arthur. "It goes to sleep just as you do."

"How nice!" returned Hester, musingly. "I think I like a sun-dial."

"*Non numero horas,* etc.," said Edward.

"Like Mrs. Westerley," laughed Arthur. "Come along, Hester; that 's Latin, and you have no business with it. I hope you never will."

"Tell her your lines about the dial, Arty."

"No, sir."

"Please do, Arty."

"No! A-coasting we go; and when I go a-coasting, I go a-coasting. But, Hester," he said aside, "some time I will." The ready little woman smiled, well pleased, and presently the two sleds were speeding down the long coasting-hill, where by and by Mrs. Westerley came, and to the lads' immense delight was persuaded to try it once with Arthur, and was soon the youngest of the party, until, as she toiled up the hill glowing and joyous, she chanced to notice the elder lad painfully shifting his station as he leaned against a tall tulip poplar, and looked with a certain gravity at the wild career of the gliding cutters.

"Not tired?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. I 'm an old woman, you know."

"I wish I felt myself as young a man," he replied, smiling, as he glanced with admiration at her straight, active figure and frank face.

"Oh, we shall get you well," she said. "Don't think about it, Ned."

"Yes, I know, of course. I try not to think of it, and sometimes life is so strong in me that I believe I shall yet be as other men; but I never shall be, — never! And last night, Mrs. Westerley, I dreamed — You don't mind my telling you? Father says it is bad manners to tell your dreams."

"Oh, my dear Ned, what an old-fashioned notion! Go on. What was it?"

"I dreamed I was riding into the thick of a great fight behind Colonel Fox, — what that dear

old Kingsley calls a melley, — and shots were flying, and I was riding, riding like mad, for a rebel flag; and then I had it, and the thought came over me, as I broke through the lines, 'Oh, what will mother say now!' And then I woke and — my God, I cried!"

"And you have made me cry, too, Ned. I wish I could help you! But perhaps God has other work for you in life than this; who knows, Ned?"

"Who, indeed?" he said. Then she grasped his hand, dropped it, and was silent. She was a woman who thought less about her words than her actions, and in whose life the undercurrents of tenderness and reverent feeling were strong, and the purer for the rarity with which they came to the surface.

Not the wisest sermon could have helped him like her few words, and the man-like grip, which filled him with a wholesome sense of being understood by a nature as noble as his own.

At last he mastered himself. He had been afraid to speak. "Thank you," he said. "How you help a fellow! Arty, my poet, says that you are just like the sun: you can never see the shadows."

"Oh, did he say that? I shall kiss him some time for that! How well he looks! I mean," she added, quickly correcting herself, "how handsome! They make a charming couple."

"I don't think him handsome," Edward returned, "but he has a strong face; and as to that child, — she is just the sweetest little person I ever saw.

Don't you know, Mrs. Westerley, how sometimes, on bleak days, you wander into the sun, and suddenly feel just comfortable, and you hardly think why for a time? That is the way I feel when that child is about."

Mrs. Westerley reflected a little. "There could hardly be a nicer girl," she returned; "but she does need a little forming."

"Now that 's mother, Mrs. Westerley; that 's mother all over."

"Oh, I think so, too! I do, indeed."

"Bother the forming!" said Edward. "Let 's go in to lunch. Now come along, steam-tugs, — one to starboard, one to port!" And laughing and chaffing one another, they went into the house.

X.

"And so," said Colonel Morton to his younger son, "I understand that you have kindly consented to go to Europe with us, for six months, and that then you propose not to go to Harvard. How old are you, please?"

"Eighteen, sir, last March."

"And you intend, I am told, in six months, to take command of the Potomac army."

"I want to enter as a private."

"Bless me, you are modest!"

Arthur flushed. He and his father were never altogether in accord. The lad had his father's resolute will, and far more than his intelligence.

"I thought," he said, "until quite lately, that you would like it, sir. We have had somebody in every war, and I would n't like to grow up and feel that neither Ned nor I had had a share in this one; and Ned can't go, you know."

"Yes, I know. He has got that confounded Irving constitution, — no stuff in it! What the deuce do you want to go into the army for?"

"Excuse me, father, but why did you?"

"Upon my word, I don't know! I rather think I was bored, in this enchantingly wide-awake town."

"And you won't say I must not go, father?"

"No, you young stupid. Your mother will have a horrible time over it; but really, I suppose it is a matter of breed, and I might as well tell my pointer Joe not to stand at a pheasant. The next thing you would go, whether I liked it or not."

"No, I would not."

"Then you would n't be your father's son. Why do you always contradict me?"

"But I don't."

"Yes, you do. What else are you doing now? If this war lasts, I will write to Stanton, or the governor, and get you a commission; but remember, sir, no nonsense about going into the ranks. There, your mother wants you to drive her over to the doctor's. Take Bessie, and don't lame her, and see that she is roughed."

"Yes, sir, and thank you."

"Oh, you need n't thank me!" And the boy left him, feeling half satisfied, and, as was usual after a talk with his father, a good deal hurt.

"He is worth all the rest of the lot," soliloquized the colonel. "I felt as if I were looking into a mirror."

Mrs. Westerley would have said, and with reason, that the colonel flattered himself. Colonel Morton had, in fact, made up his mind, before the boy spoke of it, that he should have his way; and that it would be a sore trial to the lad's mother was, he also felt, perfectly natural, but practically a matter to be disregarded. If he had been asked

why his son should enter on a perilous career at eighteen, he probably would have said and thought that people of a certain position were pledged thereby to do certain things, one of these being to fight.

Meanwhile, the object of his parental reflections was driving Bessie, in a neat sleigh, at a rate to which the father would certainly have demurred, and at which the portly mother, coiled up in furs beside him, was more or less disturbed. By and by he pulled up a little, and found time to talk over his plans.

"Father says that you won't like my going into the army, mother; but you won't say I must not? You know I would have to stay, then, and I ought to go. Jack Wilmington is only a year older than I am."

"But he has no mother."

"Worse luck for him. I have one who knows where a man's duty lies, in these days."

Mrs. Morton felt this to be a little artful, but, nevertheless, she liked it, and six months made up a long time. Europe was far away, and it is one thing to say yes for to-morrow, and quite another to say yes for six months off. She glanced at the boy's side face, and, noting its stern and powerful outline and its look of intense earnestness, said with some gravity, "It is — it will be hard, Arthur; but I never disagree with your father, though it seems a great sacrifice."

"But I don't mean to be a sacrifice," returned

her son; "not to the Johnny Rebs, anyhow. Thank you, mother," and, leaning over, he kissed her.

"You foolish boy! you have put my bonnet all awry."

"Yes, ma'am," said the lad, well pleased.

Then they flew along the main street, and Bessie was pulled up at the doctor's door.

"Send Hester out, mother. Please don't forget!" So presently Hester came forth, laughing, in a gray fur hood of Miss Ann's, and was whisked along up lanes and by-roads at a rate which took her breath away; and was told the sun-dial verses and many others, and about the war, which concerned her more.

"And you might be killed!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," he replied, "I might, but I won't. We have had all our ill luck already, and I may come back a general. No, I don't mean that, but perhaps a colonel."

"I won't be satisfied unless you are a colonel. I like colonels. I saw Colonel Fox, and I like him."

"But I won't have you liking any colonel but me, — and here we are at home, again. Stay with me till mother comes out."

"But I ought to go in."

"Don't go! I will tell you stories;" and the young fellow whose fertile brain was full of Arthur and his knights, and Roland and what not, held the little lady tranced in the pleasant country of

Romance, while within their elders discussed her future life.

It so happened that while Mrs. Morton drove over from her own home, Ann Wendell had been sitting up-stairs, with her sewing in her lap, thinking a good deal, as was her wont, about her brother and his affairs ; and a good deal, too, of the orphan, who seemed now to have been left to her care, with little or no chance that any relatives in the South would come forward to claim her as their own by superior right of kindred. With characteristic sense of duty, and of late with a vague feeling of jealousy at her brother's sudden attachment to the child, and yet with a kindly desire to please him in this, as in all else, Ann had set herself sedulously to see that she did not fail in the face of her novel obligation. At any moment she would gladly have been relieved of her task, but it had been put upon her by a Providence, which for her overruled all things, and she felt distinctly that she must answer the call, and so leave nothing undone.

When she was a teacher she had always taken a certain pride in the idea that she had some insight into the characters of her pupils, and now she had framed rather in haste a conception as to what Hester was and what she needed. The child's accuracy and exactness in her tasks, as well as her notable conscientiousness, caused Ann to think that she in some ways resembled herself, as in fact she did, in these especial particulars ; but Ann had in her own being no clew to the tangle we call charac-

ter, and utterly lacked capacity to unravel into distinctiveness of appreciation its changing web and woof. The intelligence of each year of growth is commonly underrated by those who are called on familiarly to observe it, and very few apprehend the zones of change through which a clever girl, approaching womanhood, is apt to pass, or understand that temporary displays of capriciousness, or melancholy, or irritability are only expressions of physiological changes consistent with general healthy growth. Indeed, Ann looked aghast when, on complaining to her brother that Hester had been unmanageable for the last month or so, he said to her, "My dear Ann, children have moral measles sometimes. Only let them alone, and they will get well of themselves. There is a wise herb in the gardens, Ann, and it is called Thyme."

Ann felt that she had not received any very great assistance. In fact, Wendell saw one side of the girl's character, and his sister another, and a small one; for this bright little crystal had many facets.

Mrs. Morton was marveling, like Alice Westerley when she had paid her last visit, over the odd literature on the table. It had changed a little, for Wendell often haunted the cloistral alcoves of the old Franklin library on Fifth Street, and found a pleasure in books which a generation or two had left unread since James Logan had placed them upon its shelves.

Ann Wendell, coming down from her room, re-

ceived her guest quietly. She did not like her overmuch, and was a little in awe of a woman who, without quite knowing that she did it, patronized her with such supreme gentleness, and yet with so much sense of never asking anything but what must be right.

"Won't you put off your cloak?" said Ann.

"No, thank you; I have only a moment to stay. But — excuse me — who does read all these books, and are you a Swedenborgian?"

"No, I am not," replied Ann, severely.

"Oh, it must be your brother, then?"

"He reads all sorts of things," said Ann, diplomatically; and then, taking herself to task for lack of exact truth, added, "My brother does not go to the church of those people."

"Oh," said Mrs. Morton, with the feeling that she had made a false step, "I suppose, not, of course. It is such an absurd mysticism. I thought I should like, before I go away, to talk to you a little about Hester Gray. You won't mind it, will you? You know we are all so very fond of her."

"Of course not; why should I?" said Miss Wendell.

"I have thought that I would write to her people in the South, if you liked. We have ways of getting letters through the lines, and if you think well of it I can write to the cousin, Henry Gray, of whom she speaks."

"I believe my brother has already done so," said Ann; "at least, he said that he would. He

has n't much time now, and he forgets. I ought to have asked him about it again."

"But even if he has written, it will be as well that I also write."

"If you please; but I don't think we shall hear, and I begin to believe that the little girl will be with us until the war is over."

"No doubt you must feel it somewhat of a burden."

"It was the Lord's doing," returned Ann, "and I try to see that it is my duty to take care of her." She would not say that it was not a burden.

"But still it must be a care. I think that the whole weight ought not to fall on you, and that, if it be agreeable to you and to the doctor, I might send her to Miss Pearson's school, on Long Island."

"You are very kind," replied Ann, "but I teach her myself; and if I let her go away I should feel as if I had thrust aside what God had sent me. I should n't consider it to be quite right. At least, I don't think I should."

"But you can't teach her French, or drawing, and she has a good deal of talent that way."

"I don't see that French is needful," returned Ann. "I have never found any use for it."

"And yet she might," said Mrs. Morton. "And then — you will pardon me," she added, with sublime indiscretion — "but don't you think that as she has been brought up an Episcopalian she ought to go to the Episcopal church? Now, at Miss Pearson's" —

Ann flushed a little, and sat up a trifle in her chair. "No," she exclaimed, interrupting her visitor, "what God gave, I am responsible for to Him. I trust that in the essential matters of religion she will not be found wanting. You are very kind, but I cannot see it in your way. However," she added, conscious that she was addressing not only a very kind woman, but a valuable patient, "I will talk it over with Ezra."

And then Mrs. Morton, put to rout, but by no means defeated, resolved that she too would talk to Ezra Wendell, and so went her way to the sleigh, out of which the laughing Hester slipped as she came.

Mrs. Morton's campaigns were usually brief, and in one way or another decisive. She sent her sleigh to the doctor's in the afternoon of the same day, with a note to him, and desired her servant to await a reply. Dr. Wendell chanced to be at home when this message came. The note was only to the effect that Mrs. Morton wanted to see him about the colonel, and in a postscript there was added, Would he be sure to bring Hester, as Mrs. Morton had a present for her, — a fur jacket, — and she wished to have it tried on, to see if it fitted.

Wendell knew that he must again, for the hundredth time, summon the girl from Ann's schooling.

"Ann," he called at the foot of the stairs, — "Ann, come down a moment!"

"What is it, brother?" she cried, tripping lightly down the staircase, and looking, as Wendell noticed, very bright and well.

"Why, Ann, you come down as if you were fifteen," he exclaimed; "and how good-looking you grow!"

"It 's the good honest Yankee winter we have had, Ezra. But what is it? The child is at her lessons. I must go back to her. She does them so well that it is getting to be quite a pleasure to me. What is it?"

"I have a note from Mrs. Morton. There, read it, dear; and I am really sorry, Ann. I did mean to respect your hours, but I suppose this time she must go."

Ann's face rarely betrayed emotion. Her stern orthodox New England training had taught her such restraint of emotion as saved the features habitually from telling her secret thoughts. Whatever was, be it small or great, was to be endured. If there was little laughter in her life, there were also few tears. But now, if ever, she was very angry. She saw defeat in the distance, and knew that she must yield, and somehow be made to show a semblance of being grateful; and she also felt that Mrs. Morton's note was deceitful, and for herself there was no big or little in this matter of truthfulness. These thoughts went swiftly through her mind, and she hesitated a moment.

"I should like," she said, "to talk to you before you go. Mrs. Morton was here to-day, and" —

"But, sister," he returned, "I have to meet Dr. James in an hour, and I must go to Mrs. Morton's first, and her horses are waiting in the cold We can talk to-night."

Ann felt that to-night would be too late.

"Very well," she replied, rather shortly for her, "I will send her down to you;" and she went upstairs, feeling that life was being made quite too hard.

Wendell and Hester found Mrs. Morton and Mrs. Westerley in the drawing-room, enjoying the cup of tea which Mrs. Morton well knew the doctor liked. After a few words in regard to the colonel and his coming voyage, they drew together about the fire. Then the boys were heard calling Hester; but Mrs. Morton said, "No, I want Hester myself, Edward. Come back in half an hour."

"And what 's up now?" asked Arthur.

"Better ask," observed Edward.

"Not I, Ned;" and they went away from the door.

"I have been having a chat with Miss Ann today," said Mrs. Morton; "a talk about my friend Hester, here." The girl looked up, sudddenly curious, and feeling a new importance. "We did not quite agree, but I think we shall. I am anxious that Hester should go to Miss Pearson's school on Long Island. I know Miss Pearson well, and the school is all we could desire. Colonel Morton also wishes it, and we both desire to have the pleasure of helping you and Miss Ann in this way."

Wendell's heart sank within him. He was growing to love the small person at his side with a deep and strange tenderness, the strength of which discovered itself to him now abruptly, as he heard

of the possibility of her being taken out of his life. He looked down at the child, and up at Mrs. Morton.

"Do you think it really necessary?"

"I do. There are many reasons for it, — many." She did not state them all, nor did she choose to do so. "However well able Miss Ann may be to teach her, there are things which she cannot teach. You of course know what I mean. Then, Miss Ann was not well last fall; and even if she is better now, the burden of Hester's lessons will be felt some time, and then we shall be away, and it will be past remedy. So you see how desirable it is. Colonel Morton wished me to say to you that he felt that, having in a measure promised her father to see after the girl, he thought a share of the responsibility of her care lay with us, and that as we can well afford it we should have some part in providing for her."

Wendell was perplexed. It did not sound much like the colonel.

"What do you think, Mrs. Westerley?" he inquired. "You will pardon me, Mrs. Morton, if I ask."

The doctor was learning socially a good deal, and was a very different person from the Ezra Wendell we first knew.

"Miss Pearson was my old school-mistress, and is my friend," said Mrs. Westerley. "She is a gentle, high-minded woman. If I were Hester, I should like it well. Don't you think you will, Hester?"

Hester had a good deal of the caution of clever girlhood, the outcome of intelligence and inexperiance.

"I don't know," she replied. "I like it at home. Every one is so kind to me — and — and — you all, and Arty, and Mr. Edward."

"Well, go up-stairs," said Mrs. Morton, "and ask my maid for a present I have for you, and put it on, and then go and ask Arty how it looks."

"A present?" exclaimed Hester. "Oh, thank you, Mrs. Morton!" and left the room.

"We were thinking," continued Mrs. Morton, "that if this girl has no relatives who will help her, and has no fortune, as seems to be the case, a simple education, however sound, will be of little use to her; while if she can become an accomplished woman, she may be able to help herself, come what may. Does n't that appear reasonable to you?"

He had to confess that it did.

"She draws cleverly now, and reads French well. It does seem to me, doctor, that a year at Miss Pearson's, with what she could get afterwards here, would be of lifelong value."

Wendell felt that his cause was lost.

"But my sister," he rejoined.

"I was thinking," returned Mrs. Westerley, "that I would see her. Mrs. Morton is very busy."

"If you would," he said. "I certainly shall do all I can to help the girl in whatever way seems the best, but Ann has her own ideas, as you will find."

Mrs. Morton was well aware of this, but she thought that she saw her way now, and was beginning to feel that more obstacles than there was need for were put in the way of her kind intentions.

"I dare say that we shall make her come over to our side, and Mrs. Westerley will see her. Few people resist her."

This was very much Wendell's own opinion; so he thanked Mrs. Morton, finished his tea, and rose to go, as Hester came in with the young men, looking rosy and pretty in the little sealskin jacket, which admirably set off her delicate complexion, in which the color came and went so ceaselessly.

"And you have n't thanked me, Hester."

Hester kissed her. "The boys think I look so nice," she said, and she turned herself around for inspection. She was at that formless age of girlhood when the face anticipates in development the changes which yet are lacking in the frame; and now the heavy cloak hid what was as yet ungraceful, so that both of the elder women exchanged quiet glances of admiration at the girl's appearance.

Then Hester and Wendell, after a little laughing chat, went away.

"I would like to take that girl to Newport, in two or three years," said Mrs. Westerley. "But do you ever think of what a tempting little personage she is going to be, Helen? Those boys of yours!"

"Nonsense, Alice. Ned is out of the question, and Arthur will possibly be away for years. I

should as soon think of their falling in love with you."

"But they both have," affirmed her friend, laughing. "However, remember that I have warned you."

"If Dr. Wendell were a little more of a man of the world, I should think you ran rather more risk from him, Alice, than from my boys," returned Mrs. Morton, smiling, but regarding Alice attentively.

"I have seen enough of men of the world."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Morton.

"Stuff, Helen! you always misunderstand me;" but she had a queer sense of a suddenly widened horizon of the possible. What had she said or done to justify such a suspicion? "I must go," she said. "Please order my ponies."

"I am afraid I have vexed you, Alice."

"Yes, you have vexed me."

"I did n't mean to."

"No, I dare say."

"And you will come over to-morrow? If you don't, I shall think you are angry."

"Yes, I 'll come. We have made too much of it, and I will see that rosy-faced, impassive Ann Wendell. Your account of her was immensely amusing. How can one live with such a conscience; I think they begin in childhood, in New England, with girls' consciences, as the Chinese do with their children's feet, until when they grow up they can't stir, morally speaking, without discomfort. I have no patience with them!"

XI.

Mrs. Westerley had less difficulty with Ann Wendell than she had expected. She set forth, quietly and distinctly, the need for an orphan, a dependent orphan, to have some such education as would fit her to sustain herself when the time came. Then she sympathized with Ann as to the religious aspect of the case, and at last won her somewhat reluctant consent to Mrs. Morton's plan of sending Hester to school. Hester was to go to Miss Pearson's, and she, Mrs. Westerley, would write at once to that lady; and here was a check, which Colonel Morton wished to be used for the child's clothes. Ann took it, but did not like to do so. Somehow, it seemed to her like a charity to her brother and herself, and she had the admirable dislike of the hardy New England mind to being assisted by money. Moreover, — and this Alice Westerley of course failed to comprehend, — Ann had a decided indisposition to receive for Hester any favors from Colonel Morton. In fact, she kept saying to herself, "How will this child feel if she ever comes to know that, however innocently, the man to whom she owes so much was at least suspected of having killed her father? I ought to think for her now." But her brother had laughed at Ann about this,

and it was a matter already ignored or forgotten by everybody but herself; besides, Ezra, who was indifferent as to money, had already told her that the Mortons expected to assist them, and so what could she do but accept for Hester this further kindness? Nevertheless, Ann did not use the check until more than once reminded of it by Wendell.

Mrs. Morton felt easier after this settlement of Hester's affairs, and in a couple of weeks sailed for Liverpool with her husband and Arthur, while Edward came to stay at the doctor's, where a room had been made comfortable for him by his mother's lavish care; and so a new chapter in life began for those concerned in this tale.

"I shall be home again in six months," Arthur said. "Hester, you will write to me. If you don't, I shall come back in three months."

"Then perhaps I won't write, Arty," replied the young lady.

"She won't have time to write to all of us," said Edward, smiling; "and I promise you that I mean to have my share."

Arthur looked up, and remarked, testily, "She must write to me, anyhow. You are so near her, it can't make any matter."

"Halloa, old fellow," returned Edward, "I was jesting! What makes you so savage? We don't say 'must' to young ladies."

"I was n't savage," said Arthur.

"Were n't you? Well, I beg pardon. We can't have a row now."

"No, brother."

"And I will write a little to both," promised Hester, — "if I may, you know."

Then Edward said good-by, and Arthur followed Hester alone to the door. "Good-by," he said. "Don't forget me," and he kissed the hand he yet detained in his own. The girl reddened. She was a little startled by his passionate manner.

"I won't forget you, Arty;" and she went away with a strong feeling of sorrow at parting, and with an odd and novel sense of a secret between Arty and herself, — some half-felt idea that he had been pleasant to her, and that he had kissed her hand like a knight, and that it was n't a thing she would tell.

The short time which elapsed between the sailing of the Mortons and Hester's departure for school was very delightful to Edward. He moved about with difficulty, but nevertheless it was a new pleasure to drive Hester across the park, or up through the lanes to Chestnut Hill. It was also something to escape the trying atmosphere of home, and, though he did not realize it in thought, from his mother's too remindful care and his father's constant discontent with life. He found the Wendells very pleasant. Men who are abruptly shut off from active life turn instinctively for aid to women, and in Miss Wendell Edward discovered a kind of helpfulness different from that which Mrs. Westerley gave, and yet as valuable. Ann liked the manly, enduring young fellow, with his broad, gaunt

form and the soft voice which was always coming at right moments to soothe or sustain, or decoy her into a smile. The broken life of this young athlete moved her strangely, perhaps because she was and felt herself in a woman's sense competent for anything in the work of life, and was now awed to see in a man a like competence suddenly destroyed. Yet it is doubtful if she would have felt thus for a young woman. Certainly, not so deeply; and indeed, as a rule, she somewhat despised sick women.

She found errands for Edward to do, and knew with feminine clearness when he wanted a wood fire and loneliness. She soon said, "I just do like to have that boy around." A servant came daily, and did what Edward desired; but Ann had declined to have another man to stay in the house. "Three?" she declared. "I could n't stand that!"

Wendell, too, the young man found pleasant. The deficiencies of the doctor's nature were seen but by few, and rarely in the visible life of society or of his profession. If certain people did not quite like him, they had often to confess that they hardly knew why, and he was commonly described as a bright and intelligent companion and wonderfully learned in many ways. This was all true. Some people make admirable, indeed delightful acquaintances, and are gifted with the *camaraderie* of the minute, but have no capacity for friendship. And there are good friends who make poor acquaintances. As to Wendell, he liked many people

easily, but not deeply, and at present was entertained with the young man, who promised to relieve what he sometimes felt was a growing narrowness in his life with Ann. He craved sympathy in his pursuits, and desired, as some men do, that they should interest every one. Ann had discovered this, but perhaps her interest was a little formal in its outward expression; at all events, Edward seemed to be a much more promising auditor, and a fresh one.

Out of it came a wholesomer existence for Edward Morton. His young life at school, where he learned nothing and would learn nothing, was broken, when he was fifteen, by his father, who in a rage sent him to expend his wild energies on a cattle ranch in Texas, with Mrs. Morton's brother. There he rode and hunted, and was shot at by Indians, until some time after the death of the uncle, whose heir he became, when the outbreak of treason in Texas sent him home in haste. His escape had been perilous, and in the long exposures which accompanied it he probably acquired the malady which had left him but a sad on-looker in a world where nature had meant him to play a prominent part. But now he was left without resources. To shoot, to ride, to fish, to swim, were not for him.

"Why, doctor, I can't even stand long enough to play out a game of billiards. I think I see myself reduced to whist, or to the condition in which my father used to be when he got shaved twice a day, because he had nothing else as interesting to do."

"You might make me some jack-straws, Mr. Edward," observed Hester, who was coiled up on a cushion at his feet, while Wendell gazed into his microscope, or looked through a book for some figure to match the awful beasts who wandered about under his lens, and Ann sat busily knitting, near by.

Ann looked up. "That 's a good idea, child. When my father had been very ill, and was getting well, he used to whittle. It was wonderful how quiet it kept him. He used to whittle almost all day."

"Were you ever at Bangor?" inquired Wendell. "Down East we call it Bangore; why, I don't know. What my sister says made me think of it. It is all chips and sawmills, and the rivers are thick with shavings and choked with sawdust. I think whittling must have been invented there."

"We will go there next summer, Hester, all of us, and see it," returned Edward.

"But you can learn to whittle now," persisted Hester. "I know how. I can show you. Have you a sharp knife?"

"What a child!" exclaimed Edward, delighted. "A knife? Six of them."

"And you will want some soft, dry, white pine," said Ann. "I will see about it to-morrow."

"Thank you. You are very good to me; and really, it is a first-rate notion for a small monkey."

"I am not very small, and I am not a monkey, Mr. Edward," rejoined the young lady.

"Well, a nice monkey."

"No, not even a nice monkey! I am just Miss Hester Gray."

"And not Hester?"

"Yes, when you are nice, I am Hester; and when you are not, I am Miss Gray. That's my real name," she added, nodding her head.

Edward was amused at the half earnestness of the growing girl.

"But," said Ann, "you should n't speak just in that way to older people."

Had Hester been her own child, the reproof would have been more decisive.

"I did n't mean anything, Miss Ann."

"Then you should not speak unless you do mean something."

"It's our way," interrupted Edward. "We have it out, now and then; but this engagement was very mild. When we do clear the decks for action, you may take care!"

"I shall leave then," said Ann, smiling.

"And I," added Wendell. "But just come here, Edward. Don't shake the table! There, move this screw. It is the fine adjustment."

Edward looked and wondered. Here was a wild world of strange creatures; possibly, as to numbers, a goodly town full of marvelous beasts, attacking, defending, eating, or being eaten: some, mere tiny dots, oscillating to and fro; some, vibratile rods; and among them, an amazing menagerie of larger creatures, whirled hither and thither by active cilia too swift in their motions to be seen.

"Let me sit down and look at them, doctor. What a sight! It makes my head swim. Have you seen them, Hester?"

"Oh, yes," Hester answered; "I am quite fond of some of them. Do show him the rhizopod with the pebble house shaped like Mrs. Morton's Greek vase, uncle."

"Hester, I told you yesterday that you must not call Dr. Wendell 'uncle,'" Ann broke in. "It is not truthful; that is why I don't like it."

"But I do," said Wendell, laughing, "and I can't have her calling me 'doctor.' I think, Ann, you are quite too particular."

"Have your way. It is n't any very great matter."

"No, it is n't any very great matter," returned Wendell.

"And if there are titles around loose," said Edward, "I mean to be grandpapa. It is a very privileged position."

"I wish to choose grandpapas for myself, Mr. Edward."

"Edward, please."

"No, — 'Mr.' Edward."

"Well, it is like a Greek vase," cried Morton, again looking down into the microscope; "and how beautiful it is!"

"It was found between two wet bricks in a sidewalk, by a great naturalist," remarked Wendell.

Edward still peered musingly through the glass.

"There seem," he thought, "to be a great many

things I have never seen or heard of." Then he asked, "What do you call this fellow?"

"It is a fresh-water sponge."

"Goodness!" returned Edward, "are sponges alive? Do I mop myself with a beast?"

"I don't care about their names," said Hester, laughing, — "they won't come when they are called; but I like to know their looks, and see which must be cousins and which must be brothers and sisters."

"Yes," replied Morton, "I should fancy that might be good fun."

"And then," cried Hester, "it 's very nice to get a lot of stuff from the ponds near Fisher's Mill, — just all along the edges, you know, — and to come home and see with the microscope what you have got."

"Hum," returned Edward, "it might have the charm of gambling without the cost. That 's what makes all gambling so amusing. It 's a kind of gambling. And how many things, Miss Gray, are there in life that interest you?"

"Mr. Morton," she said, making him a coquettish courtesy, "I could n't tell you in an hour."

"Then don't begin," laughed Edward.

"The child does like a good many things," observed Wendell. "But our menagerie is small, now; only a remnant of our beasts are left in these saucers. When June comes we will go a-hunting."

"It seems a droll idea to get a great bag of this small game," said Edward, "and not know what

you have till you get home! Comical; kind of lottery, is n't it?"

"Rather; but you get to like it."

"Hester," said Ann, glancing at the clock, "bedtime, — bedtime, and past. 'Early to bed and early to rise' — and you know the rest."

"But, Miss Ann, would n't I go to bed a little wiser if I might wait till you read? I know you will read when I am gone."

"I was thinking of that myself," said Wendell; for he had now got his young patient into the habit of reading aloud with him, and was wise enough to lure him on with such prose or verse as he thought would be the most pleasant bait. Some echo of the wild life he had left, or some ringing lyric which recalled the strife into which he would have wished to plunge, was delightful to Edward. The little lady, too, was herself cunning in her choice.

"Just a half hour, Miss Ann," pleaded Edward; "and then I will go to bed, too. See how good I am!"

"You all spoil her," said Ann; but the permission had already been taken for granted.

"I like this," said Hester, decisively, putting an open book in Edward's hand.

"Why, it 's that idiot Wordsworth!"

"Well, but read," said Hester.

"Oh," exclaimed he, "what 's this, then? 'Bear me to the heart of France is the longing of the shield.' Halloa, Hester, that *is* poetry! I 'll try it;" and with a voice of many tones he read aloud

that great lyric to the tender lines at its close, when, as after a flare of warlike bugles, the large silence is filled with a song of peace, of the sweetness of tender giving, and of kindness treasured in remembrance in peasant homes through centuries after. "By George," he cried, "that 's great verse! No more to-night. To bed, Miss Gray, to bed! Please to carry my candle up. 'Quell the Scot, exclaims the lance.' I must learn it! I shall read it better next time."

"Did you really never see it before?" asked Wendell.

"See it!" repeated Morton. "How should a Texas cowboy have seen anything? This leaving me, Hester, just as my education begins, is rather rough, I think. But women are all heartless. Good-night. Ah, that 'longing of the shield!' I think I understand."

This sort of intellectual contact was unknown to Edward Morton's previous existence. Even had he been at home he would have seen none of it. The Mortons read books, and were reasonably up to the day, and could smile at Mr. Wilmington's mislaid Addisonian quotations; but the true book-life they knew not. Books were in, but not of, their lives, whereas Wendell was an absorber of books, and honestly loved the old literature, while Hester was quickly showing, in this genial air, that curious, keen zest for all printed matter which her friend Arthur also had, and which sets a boy or a girl to browsing along book-shelves, as deep to-day

in an almanac as to-morrow in Grote or Gibbon. Even Ann, who read least, had her literary likings and fought for them, and they talked about books with unaffected interest, fictitious characters affording them such cheerful gossip as Morton heard elsewhere about servants and children.

Little by little, as has chanced before to many an invalid, there opened thus to the stranded man a new and strange world. In health he could never have known it. Now, by degrees, its men and women were forced upon his acquaintance, and, like some obligatory acquaintanceships, grew pleasant as he became accustomed to them. But it seemed very odd to him to be, as he felt it, leaving one world and pleasantly entering another. As time moved on, however, he learned how wholesome for his troubled being were these novel interests, to which, after Hester left, he began to turn still more eagerly. It was clear to Alice Westerley that new and grateful occupations were finding a place in the young man's life, and to talk of them began to make a part of the frequent chats with the widow, which were a portion of the limited happiness of his present very quiet days.

And so the winter sped away, and there were genial letters from Arthur, who was in France, and busy endeavoring to determine the whereabouts of the field of Roncesvalles. The colonel was mending, as Dr. Lagrange had predicted; but despite this Mrs. Morton's letters were not very happy. At that time Confederate heroes were rather the

rage in Europe among the mongrel English who lived on the Continent, but nevertheless the colonel was a social success. He always had been and always would be, and as a rich American was agreeably received everywhere, especially by the Italian princes and French counts, for whom there were and are but two classes of Americans, — the poor and the rich. Besides, Morton was calmly indifferent, and neither wanted nor sought any one; and this, to the better class of English, is always more or less a social shibboleth. The colonel was thus in a measure courted, and on the whole liked the idle life about him.

His wife did not. She was a very considerable personage at home, and abroad she was "that large woman," "very nice, you know," "the wife of that distinguished-looking American." Nor was Arthur any better pleased. Being tall and sturdy, he had been asked by a Frenchman how it came that he was in Europe, when it was said that in his country even the boys were in the army; but that, perhaps, was in the South, where there was a sort of *noblesse*, and "that *oblige*, you know," at which Arthur was furious. Somewhat later, as the colonel got better, and the spring opened, they had tried England, where they had many acquaintances, the product of several visits abroad; but here even the colonel, with his easy indifference to political opinions, was uncomfortable, amidst the constant and outspoken hostility of the upper class to his country, while Arthur was in one long agony of ill-con-

cealed wrath. At last, in early May, Mrs. Morton confided to Alice Westerley that England was unendurable.

"My dear Alice," she wrote, "to-morrow we leave for the north of Italy, and glad enough I am to go. You cannot conceive what it is to be in England at present. I do not see how Mr. Adams stands it at all. But I suppose his position protects him somewhat. To us, I can assure you, these people are anything but diplomatic. And as to Arthur, I shall be glad this month to let him go home. Yesterday he had what he calls a 'row' with some young Englishmen, and having used certain very strong language is in a rage to-day because they declined, one and all of them, to be shot in France — all of which especially pleases his father, who says that the boy behaved very well.

"So to-morrow, to my great relief, as I said, we leave this land of fogs and plain speaking. Lady Jane asked for you yesterday, and Mr. Melville and the Veres have been very civil. I will get you your gloves in Paris; and do not forget that Hester Gray will need summer dresses.

"I understand that Edward has taken to books and a microscope! Really, if you had told me that you were editing a dictionary, I could not have been more amazed. However, it is, I dare say, a good thing. Poor fellow! My heart yearns for that boy, Alice! I think of him day and night. And how goes our Sanitary Commission work? I inclose a draft for it. Use it as you think best."

And then followed endless requests as to the care of old servants, and what not.

"Helen Morton must be famishing for something to do," said Alice Westerley, as she came to quite a voluminous postscript.

"I reopen this letter to tell you of a curious thing which happened yesterday. Colonel Morton came in late last evening with a gentleman, who, it seems, has called here before, although the people at the Burlington somehow managed to mislay his card. Morton met him at the Reform Club, where he chanced to hear my husband's name mentioned. He is a cousin of our little Hester, and is called Henry Gray, — the relative she told us of. Although a Carolinian, he has lived in Texas, and he says that he knew my brother Edward very well. I should think he must make a sensation in English social life, for a more singular person I, at least, have never met. He is a perfectly rabid rebel: but you know Morton rather prides himself on a calm show of indifference about such matters, — and really, I suppose, as the child is concerned, he is right enough to pass over a good deal. But as to Arty, he left the room in five minutes, as red as a peony.

"What this gentleman said was that he had not heard a word directly about Hester; which is curious, as our letters — and I wrote three — were sent to his agent in Charleston. Still, nothing is sure in war-time. He had, however, learned that Captain Gray had died at the hospital, and he had

written from here to the surgeon in charge, and had got an answer, — pretty accurate, you may be sure, — from Dr. Lagrange! And now by good luck he lit on Morton. I hear that he has made no end of money in running the blockade, and that he is in some way a financial agent of the rebels. 'A pretty acquaintance!' says Master Arthur, who absolutely declined to dine with him to-day."

("I should think so," commented Mrs. Westerley. "The idea of it!")

"The man, I ought to say, has very good manners, wears a broad felt hat, and has long hair, and the smallest, thinnest boots you ever saw. When our servant helped him to take his coat off, a revolver fell out of his pocket, and nearly scared poor Price out of his life. The colonel, who was in the entry, remarked that it was n't much needed in London; upon which Mr. Gray said calmly that he did n't know about that, and that 'it made a man feel easy like.' Can you conceive of it, my dear! And these are the people our English friends look upon as aristocrats, great land-owners, and so on! Don't you wish they could see some of the 'gentlemen's seats' in the South? But I must not talk about this any more.

"It is simply impossible to credit the state of feeling here. John thinks we shall certainly have a war with England.

"However, I am delaying to tell you about what is personally very important. Mr. Henry Gray has now seen us several times. He is so well satis-

fied, owing to what we have said about the Wendells, that he intends to place ten thousand dollars in Dr. Wendell's hands, the income of which is to be used for Hester's education. He very wisely says that it will be better, in these times, to do this than to trust to his being able to send the interest in installments. I wanted to have the money put as a trust in Morton's hands, as I have no great opinion of our good friend the doctor's financial abilities; but to this John said no, and, as usual, that he had had bother enough about the matter, and that I was too suspicious, — which was dreadful, Alice, because there is no one in whom I have more confidence than the doctor. So of course I said no more, and the money goes at once to Dr. Wendell. And don't you think you might give him a hint as to getting Mr. Wilmington's advice in regard to an investment? Then you might ask Mr. Wilmington just to mention government bonds as desirable. Now is n't it all really very nice and generous?"

Then there was more about the Sanitary Commission, and exact directions as to how the draft in aid of it was to be spent; over which Alice Westerley smiled, recalling the phrase which left her free to use it as seemed best.

Last of all was a slip dated Paris, June 20th: —

"Oh, Alice, why am I not in that loathsome England to-day of all days! The Kearsarge has taken the Alabama, and I am wild with joy! Arty said such a clever thing about it this morning to old La

Roque, the famous abbé who turns the heads and the religion of the English girls. He is an insane Southern sympathizer; and when he said to Arty, 'What drolls of names for the ships!' (he thinks he speaks English) my young gentleman says, 'Yes: one is a Yankee mountain, and the other is a slave State. How could there be any doubt about the result?' which pleased John immensely. This fight has made the lad crazy; he sails in three days; and the colonel has written to the governor. So I am to have once more, dear Alice, the terror of a personal stake in the war. I feel as if I were tied to it already, — there, that is worthy of you. Ask Arty about his last interview with Mr. Gray. Don't forget."

The same mail which carried this communication brought also to Wendell a brief letter from Mr. Gray, inclosing the promised draft and an explanatory note from Colonel Morton. The former gentleman desired to be recalled to his young cousin's memory, and hoped, when the war was over and the Confederacy firmly established, to take her home with him to Texas; and beside this there was little except a warmly expressed desire that she would always remember that she was a Carolinian.

Wendell was pleased, amused, and a little disturbed in mind. He said to his sister, —

"I think it will be best not to show her this letter at all. What does she care for the South? They have been long enough in finding out about her, I am sure." But he did not say that Mrs.

Morton's last letter, which he had promised to confide to a friend who was on the staff of General Meade, and through whom Mrs. Morton desired to secure its transit across the lines, was lying in his table drawer. In fact, he had meant to send it; then he had forgotten it; and when it was brought anew to his attention, he had come to feel that this girl, who was now so interesting a part of his life, was in a measure his own. A deepening sense of unwillingness to be the instrument of separating her from her new life overcame for a time his resolves, which, at least where his own indulgence was concerned, were apt to be weak, and thus he had again delayed to act, until, finally, it was too late.

"I think I would let her see her cousin's letter," returned Ann, who was always just. "Don't you think it would be wrong not to do so? Try to put yourself in his place, Ezra."

"I will think about it," he answered.

Ann knew very well what that meant. Why think about it at all? It was clear enough.

"I would give it to her at once, Ezra. I believe myself you are rather sorry to have anybody claim her. She is certainly a very nice child, but I can't see why you and Edward Morton make such a fuss over her."

"Can't you, Ann?"

"No, I cannot; and now that she is taken charge of by her cousin, I, for one, shall feel it a great relief from a responsibility and an expense too."

"But she is n't taken out of our charge as yet; and as to the expense she has occasioned, I don't mind that in the least."

"But you should, Ezra. And I do wish you were more thoughtful about expenses! Even with your increase of practice we are always in debt. Now that new microscope: don't you think" —

"Yes, I know; but unless I had had it I should have been unable to go on with my work in that question of pyæmia; and you know what Lagrange said about that yesterday. It is really important." And indeed it must be added that he honestly thought so.

Ann sighed. "But you will try?" she said.

Yes, he would try. So he kissed her; for on these occasions he had come to regard a kiss as an effectual means of ending objectionable debate.

Nevertheless, Ann Wendell wrote very fully to Hester, and for all she left unsaid the letter from Mr. Gray might as well have gone.

XII.

It was now early in July, in the year 1864, and Mrs. Westerley was full of her summer plans, and in a state of agreeable excitement over the expected arrival of Arthur and the return to Germantown of Hester, whom she was pleased to regard as the heroine of a little romance, and whose social education, she had resolved, should do justice to the promise of her charming face and improving fortunes. She had arranged with Miss Ann — who, as she had said, did not see any reason for so much fuss — that her own maid should go to the school, and escort Hester to Dr. Wendell's; and she had also the intention of asking that young person to spend with her a part of the summer vacation. Then, also, Arty was to be with her for two or three days. While she was discussing these matters with her maid, John announced Colonel Fox and Mr. Wilmington. Already she had been up and down stairs several times to see women who called, and she was tired; but as she never objected to see the men whom she fancied, she rose pleasantly enough, and with a critical, if hasty, glance in her mirror went down-stairs, looking at her watch on the way, as she almost momentarily expected Arthur Morton.

"Good morning, Mr. Wilmington," she said, "and Colonel Fox! What happy chance brought you here?"

"I am not sure," replied the soldier, "that it is a 'happy' chance, altogether. I got hit in the mine assault; not badly, but it has made my head uncomfortable. I always get hit somewhere!"

"Thee 's always getting into trouble," said Wilmington. "I heard thee volunteered to lead the advance. Why can't thee confine theeself to thy legitimate business? It 's just like speculating."

The widow laughed merrily, but the old gentleman was in grim earnest, and looked up at her not at all pleased.

"Oh, but Master Jack," said Fox, "that boy of yours, he was in a worse scrape. When the mine failed, he volunteered to crawl in and relight the fuse. He just got out in time, I can tell you! Do you call that legitimate business?"

"And you never told me, Mr. Wilmington!" exclaimed Mrs. Westerley. "What splendid courage!"

"And do you know, Mrs. Westerley, the boy laughed when the Herald's reporter asked him his name, next day. He told him it was John Smith!"

"Young idiot!" muttered the old gentleman; but his eyes filled. He found himself obliged to wipe his eye-glasses, and he cleared his throat of a sudden choking sensation.

"I hear that Sheridan offered him a staff ap-

pointment," said Fox, "but Jack preferred the regiment."

"I should have taken the least dangerous. These boys, these boys!"

"And do you know that I am to have Arty?" said the colonel. "He will be my youngest lieutenant."

"Oh, that is well!" exclaimed the widow. "And you will take care of him?"

"Of that breed?" cried Fox. "Not I!"

"Thee can't take care of theeself," remarked Wilmington, "it appears!"

"What is it, John?" said Mrs. Westerley to the servant who now entered.

"A telegram, ma'am."

"Oh, from Arty! Really, he has stopped to see Hester," and she read aloud: —

"'Having a letter from mother to Hester, stopped to deliver it.'"

Fox laughed. "I suppose he could n't trust the mails?"

"I think he needs looking after, Mrs. Westerley," observed Wilmington.

"I think so myself," she returned. "Indeed, I intimated as much to his mother. However, he will be here to-morrow."

"These Mortons!" exclaimed Wilmington. "A fight or a woman would stop them on the way to heaven!"

"Or to Mrs. Westerley's," suggested Fox.

"Who is a woman, please," rejoined the widow.

"A dozen of gloves," said Wilmington, "that he waits to come home with her, day after to-morrow. Will you bet?"

"Not I," replied the hostess. "I share your opinion of the Morton blood. Luckily, I sent my maid for the child. That excellent and most obdurate spinster, Ann Wendell, wondered why in the world she could n't come home in charge of the conductor. Imagine it. I never saw an American woman before who was as little plastic. I don't think she has learned anything since she came here."

"As to social wants or usages, you mean," remarked Fox. "Commonly the clever American man or maid changes easily enough as to the externals of social life."

"Ann Wendell," returned the widow, "changes neither within nor without. I should have to despise my poor self or hate such unpliable people. I suppose she is sorry, or laughs; but really, if so, it must be all done inside. And her dress is just like her face; it is never rumpled, come what may! Now is n't that kind of person rather exasperating?"

"I presume she must be so to her brother," said Fox, watchfully regardant; "but then I fancy that, like every doctor, he has all the virtues, and is up to the moral level of standing any kind of sister."

"Now is n't that a little stupid of you?" asked Mrs. Westerley. "But, stupid or not, I never let my friends be abused — except by myself!"

"But did I abuse him?"

"I think you were going to; but come and dine here to-morrow, and I will forgive you."

"I will come. Seven, is n't it?"

"No, half-past six."

"Well, I won't forget. And Miss Hester, — will she be here? Is she as handsome as she promised to be?"

"Come and see."

Then Mr. Wilmington talked about the Mortons, and a little war gossip with Fox, and at last went away.

"Dear old fellow," said Fox, "how he liked it about that boy!"

"Yes, he liked it well, and you were very nice to talk of it. But tell me, were you much hurt? I heard of it, but I did not suppose that you would have to come home."

"No, it was n't altogether the wound that brought me. I came partly to see about filling up my ranks. We lost awfully in front of Petersburg."

"Will you have any difficulty? How do you manage it, — your recruiting, I mean?"

The colonel, quite pleased, went on to tell her; and then she questioned him further about his officers and the discipline of his command. It was one of Alice Westerley's charms that she listened with natural eagerness, and that her intellectual sympathies were real and widespread. Men were taken captive, but did not know why, and wondered, as Fox did, how a woman so trained to the

habits of a class could interest, as she did, men like Wendell, with his microscope, and his queer vermin, and his musty old books. In fact, she could listen all day to the doctor's talk about his profession and his scientific pursuits; while besides this she had a pleasing sense of having helped and aided him, and liked his way of coming to her for advice when he was in any social or other difficulty. She had learned, too, that she had a singular control over his moods, and the gentle power thus exercised flattered her. She had no full means of relatively gauging and contrasting the characters of these two men, but she liked both, and influenced both, and had greatly assisted one of them, which was, little as she knew it as yet, a somewhat dangerous protectorate. It was an unguessed secret to Dr. Wendell, yet it would have been clear to Helen Morton, had she been still at home, that the man who was most ignorant of his own good fortune was the one her friend would perhaps prefer, in time; and that the quiet, manly, unpretending soldier, with his strong, definitive character, would find no such open path to her heart.

Alice looked at him as he rose to say good-by to Mr. Wilmington, and took in with a woman's quick eye the good-humor of the sun-browned face and the little scar on the left temple, and saw that he still carried his arm thrust in his half-buttoned coat; disliking the sling, which would have marked him as a wounded man, and singled him out for remark and attention. She well knew that the man

who now sat so quietly talking to her was renowned in war as a relentless disciplinarian, and as a soldier gallant beyond what was common even in those splendid and terrible years. She was also aware that at home he was trusted and honored, and that, with a woman's tact and diplomacy, she had been keeping him at a certain friendly distance; not able to love him, and yet unwilling quite to lose him from her life.

They chatted pleasantly of their absent friends and of the army, and then she read to him from Mrs. Morton's letter some of the amusing and interesting bits.

"And so Hester," he said, "has found a generous cousin. I am very glad for the child. I suppose now she will have plenty of friends. And after all, though the Wendells are very good people, I don't think Miss Wendell is quite the person to bring up a girl who so clearly belongs to the most refined class."

Mrs. Westerley agreed with the theory of the remark, but nevertheless, without precisely knowing why, did not like it.

"Miss Ann," she said, adroitly, "is so good that I don't always like to ask myself whether she is agreeable or not. Few people would have done what the Wendells did for such a little waif as Hester." Then she took a quite feminine vengeance: "I saw her last month, by the way, and you never could imagine the change six months have made. She seemed to me, at first, too childish

for her years; but even before she went away she was what my nurse used to call 'eldering.' You know, colonel, how at sixteen girls make in six months that curious leap into womanhood that never ceases to surprise one."

"Yes," he returned; "they quickly go past the young fellows who are a year or two older, or even more."

"I think Master Arthur will discover that, to his astonishment. I believe I shall keep her for you, colonel! When the war is over, you will have to settle down, and by that time Miss Gray will be a pearl of pearls. I shall set about educating her myself; and as I know your wants pretty well, only imagine what a success I shall make!"

The return shot was artful, and went home.

"But if the pupil is to become all this, what must the teacher be?"

"Oh, that was worthy of Colonel Morton in his most devoted moments. I must get my work. I don't see how you men can talk all day with your hands idle. That is the reason, I believe, you are always getting into mischief. 'For Satan,' you know."

Then she threw a tangled skein of silk over a chair-back, and began to wind it on a spool, upon which the colonel promptly transferred the skein to his own hands, remarking, "I shall do much better than a chair, and as I shall have my hands employed I shall be kept out of mischief."

Mrs. Westerley was not quite so sure about this, but she said,—

"Very well; and keep your hands quiet, now, and don't try to help me. Men always do."

Fox wondered how many men had gone through this pleasant ordeal. He might have recalled the sad experience of Joseph Sedley.

"I shall be angelic," he said.

"And does n't it hurt your arm?"

"No; my arm gives me no pain unless I let it hang down."

"Well, you can rest when you are tired;" and as she chatted, her quick white hands went to and fro, carefully avoiding his touch. She knew as well as he the peril of the situation, but like the larger number of pleasant women, good or bad, there was in Alice Westerley a coquetry, which, to tell the truth, she did not always care to repress; and she now comprehended clearly enough that she was tormenting the man before her, and was herself slyly half enjoying the danger of the situation. Still, he had brought it on himself. "Don't move so," she said. "Is n't it like cat's-cradle? Did you ever play cat's-cradle when you were little? Hester is an adept at it. I shall not have to include it in my scheme of education. Then it is like all other learning: there comes a point when you cannot go further. There should be a book about it."

"Confound Hester!" he muttered.

"I beg your pardon, I did not hear you. Perhaps you were thinking that General Lee — I beg Mr. Wilmington's pardon, 'Mr.' Lee — must understand cat's-cradle."

"No, indeed; nothing of the kind. Why do you torment me so?"

"I?" she said, penitently, — "I?"

"Yes, you, Alice Westerley. You cannot really desire to give pain; it is not in your true nature. Or do you think that I am such a fool as to" —

"No," she replied, in confusion, interrupting him, "I don't. But why are you a fool?" Having said which she repented. "I mean — I beg pardon, I don't mean — I" —

"No matter," he returned. "I am a fool, because I love a woman who does not care for me."

"Then I would n't ask her to love me."

"And why not?" The man was strangely moved, and was in fact shaken by the effort to control himself. He was afraid, and his head, still troubled by his wound, swam dizzily. The breach and the fierce rush at the cannon mouth was a trifle to this. "Why not, Alice Westerley?"

"Because — because," she said, tangling the silk on her long fingers, "she might say No."

"But would she?"

"I think so," and she kept looking down at the silk. Had she glanced up at the pained white face, his fate might have been different; but she was embarrassed and troubled, and held her peace, still nervously fumbling with the snarled threads. A less tender man would have profited by her evident doubt.

"Would you ask for a glass of water?" he said. "My head is swimming — I — in fact, I" —

"I am sorry!" she exclaimed; but, happy at the release, and alarmed at his words, she hastily left the room, to seek herself what he wanted.

"My God," he muttered, "what is life worth now! How it takes it out of a fellow!"

Presently she came back. "Thank you," he said. "It was nothing. I am sorry to have troubled you. I am better now. Have you no more to say, Mrs. Westerley?"

"No, I don't think I have. I have hurt you. I wish you had not made me do it. When do you go back?"

"In a week."

"Then we shall see you to-morrow?" she asked.

"No, I forgot. I shall be too busy. Oh, of course that is nonsense, but you understand. I could n't stand it. My regards to Arty. Good-by."

She put out her hand, but he had already turned away. "Good-by," she said. "I am sorry. . . . Won't you try to think how much — how sorry I am?"

"You can't be as sorry as I am. I wish you were. Good-by."

Alice Westerley went up-stairs slowly and thoughtfully. "Tell John that I am at home to no one; remember, to no one," she said, as she passed her maid. Then she sat down at the window, rested her chin on her hands, and looking out across the shrubbery, saw Colonel Fox moving slowly down the lane. She noticed that he carried a cane, and

was viciously switching off the tops of the wayside dandelions. Very soon he was lost to view.

"He is angry," she thought. "I wish he had been angry with me. I deserved it. Well, it 's no use to think about it. I can't do it, and there come the ponies, and I wish all the men were dead!" After which emphatic statement she drove to one or two shops, and then descended on several young women at the local Sanitary Commission, and as vice-president made things a little unpleasant; and coming out met her neighbor, Mrs. Grace, a calm and somewhat subdued lady, who browsed like a placid cow on the gossip of her little circle of a morning, and chewed at evening, in the solitary companionship of her knitting needles, the sweet or bitter cud of such mild stores of social news as she had not yet digested. She had not failed to see Colonel Fox as he walked away from the widow's gate, and she had seen him when he went in, and the visit had been long.

"I hear my cousin, Colonel Fox, has come home wounded. When does he go back? So dreadful, is n't it, all this fighting? I am glad my James did n't go, or Tom."

"I know nothing of Colonel Fox's movements," returned the widow, with unusual sharpness.

"I thought you might," replied Mrs. Grace. "I thought he was a friend of yours, and I had no intention of saying anything disagreeable."

"I suppose not. People do not always know; some people never know;" but then, feeling that

she had been rude, and being really a kind-hearted woman, she turned back, and said, "Excuse me, Mrs. Grace. I did n't mean to be so short, but I have had some bad news to-day. You will pardon me, I am sure."

The widow might have spared herself this apology, as the only sensation her neighbor had was a sense of being well provisioned for the day in the knowledge that there was something between the two friends.

As for Mrs. Westerley, she smiled as she sped away with her ponies: "A vulgar woman, and hopelessly stout. She must have what Dr. Wendell calls fatty degeneration of the heart!"

XIII.

Mr. Arthur Morton would have justified the suspicions of the Quaker colonel. He paid his visit to Hester in the presence of Miss Pearson, and was to go home that day; and when was Miss Hester to go?

Mrs. Westerley was not astonished when he telegraphed her that he was detained, and as little surprised when he told, next day, how pleasant the journey had been, and how, of course, he had felt himself obliged to wait for Hester, and had left her at Dr. Wendell's, and had seen dear old Ned, who was looking a lot better. "And how nice of you, Mrs. Westerley, to have them all here to dine, — Hester, and Ned, and the doctor! Miss Ann won't come," he added. "Why does n't she come? And my colonel, — why is n't he coming, either? I wish I had thought to ask you to have him, too."

"Do give me time to breathe, Arty," answered the widow. "We can't have everybody."

"Oh, I just mentioned him because he looked so ill. I met him at the station. He was sending off a squad of men, and told me that he had telegraphed for his major, and was going back at once. I 'm off as soon as I can get my outfit."

Alice Westerley felt as if there had been a leaf

doubled down in her life book, — what, as a child, she had called a dog-ear, — and now of course everybody opened the volume at that place.

"How is your mother?" she asked.

"Well, pretty well. But every one you meet abroad now is detestable. No one believes in the North, and mother says it is depressing. She declares that she will not stay another year."

"Another year!" exclaimed Mrs. Westerley, in astonishment.

"Yes. Father does n't even talk of returning, and I think it will end in her coming over alone for a while."

"Well, go and dress for dinner. And mind that you are very attentive to the old gentleman, — you know he likes it; and don't leave him alone with Dr. Wendell and the madeira."

"Oh, no, of course not; and as to madeira, I have n't heard it mentioned for a year!"

Edward, with Hester and the doctor, came punctually; but Wilmington was late, and Arthur, of course. He was at the age when time has no value, and seems as boundlessly abundant as sand in the desert.

Hester was in simple white, with a rose in her hair. She was a source of unending wonder to Wendell and to Edward. Was this tall, fair woman, with eyes like violets dowered with souls, the awkward girl of six months ago? This amazing bit of Nature's sleight-of-hand seemed to them incomprehensible: a being child-like now, and pres-

ently clad with the well-bred composure of grown womanhood! As for Arty, he looked half dazed for a moment, as she turned to greet him. He said afterwards to Edward, in his exuberant way, "Was n't she just like June days, Ned? You could n't tell whether she was child or woman, spring or summer!"

In fact, as Colonel Fox had predicted, Hester had gone past Arthur, and he was puzzled at the metamorphosis. At last Mr. Wilmington came, and they went merrily to dinner. Mrs. Westerley's dinners were always successful. She had learned the golden rule never to put the stupid people to entertain the clever ones. But to-day there was no need for her social arts, and the party was gay without help from her. For this she was thankful. She felt dull, and was glad not to exert herself. So she talked quietly to Wilmington, and caught, at times, the bits of chat which fell from her other guests; watching with the pleasure of a gentlewoman the effect on Hester of six months' training with a refined and somewhat accurate old lady, or smiling as she recalled the social lessons of her own childhood.

"Sherry, sir?" whispered John to Mr. Wilmington.

The old gentleman raised his glass. "Your good health, Miss Gray," he said. The girl smiled, and tasted her wine. He was perhaps the last of a generation who drank healths, and he never gave up the ancient custom.

"Good manners, that child," he murmured to Mrs. Westerley. "I dined out yesterday, and do you know, when I asked a young fellow to take wine with me, he said he never drank."

"Poor fellow!" said the widow, much amused.

"And you think I shall never be a colonel, Hester?" she overheard Arty say.

"Well, not never, but not in six months, you know."

"Arty believes that he will be a general in that time," laughed Edward.

"I know he would make a better one than some of them, Mr. Edward."

"That might be," observed Wendell. "But, Hester, do you carry bugs about yet?"

"And lizards?" said Edward.

"And salamanders?" added Wendell.

"Oh, no," she laughed. "I am limited to a little plant hunting. And oh, I meant to tell you before! I took with me to school — and Miss Ann never knew it, either — a jar full of caterpillar cocoons, so as to have my butterflies in the spring. I wish you could have seen Miss Pearson's face when she saw them!"

"And what did she say?" asked Wendell.

"Oh, she said that several of the girls would be butterflies in a year or two, and that her crop was large enough. I could n't help laughing, but I cried afterwards."

"What a horrid old maid!" exclaimed Arty.

"Not the least horrid. A dear old lady. And as to old maids, I mean to be one myself."

Arty looked up, and murmured to himself, "That will be when I am a colonel, I presume."

"We shall take nets and go after beetles to-morrow evening," said Edward, "and Arty shall carry the lantern."

"Try your eyes, Hester," suggested the embryo colonel, under his breath, to his neighbor.

"What 's that, Hester?" asked Wendell.

"He says I shall find it trying to my eyes!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Westerley, who had caught the side glance. "Quite time," she thought, "that this young gentleman was in the field!"

"Eyes? What 's that about eyes?" queried Wilmington, who was a little deaf unless it was desirable that he should not hear. "Her eyes are good enough, I should say; and I think," he added in an aside to Mrs. Westerley, "that she is beginning to know how to use them."

Then there was, as always in those days, some desultory war talk.

"Hester," said Arthur, "I shall come to see you again, in my full war rig, before I go."

"I would rather you did not," she said to him quietly. "I know you must go; but I am a Carolinian, and I try to think nothing about this war. I don't want to find out whether it is right or wrong. It is awful to me, — awful."

As she had grown older the girl had been led to reflect more and more on her position and its difficulties, and this sort of thoughtfulness was new and surprising to Arthur. "How old she grows!" he

reflected. "I see, Hester," he said, — "I see! I ought to have thought all that for myself."

"Thank you," she returned, feeling that he was gentle and generous.

"And now let us have a truce to war," said the hostess, who knew better than Arthur what was in Hester's mind, and suspected that this incessant war gossip might be unpleasant to her. "Come, Hester, we will go;" and so saying, Mrs. Westerley rose, and left the men to their wine, remarking as she passed Wendell, "Lest I forget it later, will you kindly tell Miss Ann that I will come and see her about Hester to-morrow; a little early, — about twelve o'clock, I may say. And Edward, you will take care of our friends?"

The next day, when Alice Westerley entered Miss Wendell's parlor, Dr. Wendell rose and came in from the back room. His face, which was easily moved, expressed clearly the pleasure of which he was conscious whenever she was near him. Indeed, it would have been hard for any one, and least of all for one who was sensitive to beauty in form and color and sound, not to have dwelt with growing interest on one who combined all these attractions. In no other woman whom he had known were the mysteries of womanhood so developed. That he did not understand her fully was a part of her charm. Wendell himself was looking well. The combination of a forehead which was delicately moulded, and looked wiser than the man was, with a mouth of unusual mobility, and free from the

mask of the mustache, gave to his face an unusual capacity to exhibit whatever feeling was dominant.

He was now under the elating influence of a new idea, which he thought could be brought in time to useful development. He had been seized with the fancy that it would be interesting to search into, and elaborate on paper, the differences between American and European types of various maladies. For this he meant to drop, as he said, for a time other favorite subjects, for which he had collected a good deal of material of value. Mere observation within restricted fields, under some organizing and applicative mind, should have been his sole function. When he came to a point in his studies where it was needful to compare acquired facts, in order to know how to observe further, or how to obtain by experiment facts which should explain the observations of the post-mortem table, he began to find difficulties which usually ended in barring his path, until some newer, and because newer more fascinating, subject attracted for a time his easily exhaustible energy. In fact, his mental ambitions were high, his power to pursue them limited; while his capacity to be pleased with the recurrent dreams of possible future intellectual achievements was as remarkable as his failure to see why he constantly failed to realize them. Hence, while respected as a man with much general and scientific knowledge, he was known among doctors as having contributed nothing to their journals save barren reports of cases, and to naturalists as a clever amateur. But

of these siftings of a man by his fellows, the public which is to use him learns little or nothing, so that to Alice Westerley he represented the brilliant and original physician, to be justified by the patient issues of the years which go to the slow growth of a doctor's reputation.

"I am very happy," he began, "to see you. But now I must go."

Just then Ann Wendell, about to enter the room, passed him as he went out, and Mrs. Westerley heard her say, —

"I thought, brother, there was a meeting at the hospital about something."

"Yes, there is, Ann. But I was delayed."

"You can't possibly catch the train now."

"Oh, yes, I can. It is only a step."

"Well, hurry, Ezra," she said, and so left him; Alice Westerley beginning to have a faint suspicion that it was just possible he had lingered to see her. To a woman accustomed to admiration this was a trifling matter; and the fact that he had probably failed of a small duty thereby would have been of no disturbing value in her estimates, until iteration had given to such lapses a body of weight, or until some chance had occurred to see the large results of what seemed singly to be but trivial failures.

"You must excuse me," said Miss Wendell, remembering that in her haste she had spoken so as to be overheard. "My brother has his mind so full of his work that he forgets, sometimes."

"But what noble work," exclaimed Mrs. Westerley, "and what a life of constant self-sacrifice!"

Ann had heard all this before. She looked calmly at life from standpoints of duty or religion, which did not vary. If she had said literally what was in her mind, it would have been that doctors knew pretty well what was before them; or else, being fast bound to their profession, ought simply to accept as of their own making that which it is pleasant to find other good people call self-sacrifice. But it is not in even as exactly moral a nature as Ann's to be mathematically moral.

"Yes," she said, "I think it to be counted a privilege when one is called to a life of much giving, even of what one is obliged to give."

"I hope he does not suffer from these constant exposures in our rough weather? I thought that he looked better than common to-day."

"No; he is what I call a strong man. And your winters seem very mild to folks from the Cape. Like all of us, he has now and then fits of the blues; but just at present he is very happy over some new medical idea."

"About American and European diseases? Oh, yes, he spoke of it last night. I thought it so very interesting; and he tells me it is such a fresh idea."

Ann was always calmly pleased when her brother announced to her any of these novel views, which at first sight assumed to him an importance immense enough to justify the enthusiasm of which he

was always capable at the outset of undertakings. With his schemes, plans, or researches, as intellectual interests, she had no true sympathy; and it would have been foreign to her nature and her nurture to seem to be that which she was not, even for his gratification.

"It must be delightful for my brother to find people like yourself, who can enter into his ideas. I am very stupid, you know," she added, placidly smiling. "And really, I think Hester understands him in some ways better than I do!"

"Indeed!"

"You know," she continued, — for she was by this time, it must be remembered, on terms of easy acquaintanceship with Mrs. Westerley, — "it is n't always just quite agreeable to feel that some one else can be in any way more to your brother than you are, but certainly Hester is a great pleasure to him. I sometimes tell him that I think if she were older or he were younger, he would fall in love with her!"

This was not a pleasant idea to Mrs. Westerley. She hardly knew why, but even as a jest it seemed to her not quite what she would have called nice.

"No," she replied, setting aside with a well-practiced conversational device the later statement. "I can understand that a woman who is the sister of such a man as Dr. Wendell might well desire to be everything to him in his life. But how well Hester looks! Your speaking of her makes me think of what I came about. I want you to let me take her to Newport in August. Won't you, Miss Ann?"

Ann was willing enough. She liked Alice Westerley as well as she could conscientiously like any woman who had spent summers at Saratoga and in London, and who dared to say, without sign of compunction, that she had been to two balls in one evening. Moreover, she had herself made up her mind that chance, or, as she preferred to say, the will of God, had taken out of her hands the responsibility of Hester's training; while also, perhaps, there was in her mind, as the result of various circumstances, what the chemists would call a precipitate of jealousy as to Hester's relations to her brother. This was so easily stirred up that it was apt to cloud her judgment, which naturally would have made her wish to keep Hester as much as possible within her own control. In morals and social action, as in physics, it is common to find that we act under the domination of a number of influences, and submit in our decisions to what the physicist calls a resultant of forces.

"I have no doubt," she replied, "that my brother will feel that Mr. Gray would wish Hester to be with you, at least a part of the summer."

"Thank you," said Alice. "I have already mentioned it to him, and he has said that what you would wish would be what he desired."

Ann would have preferred that her brother should first have spoken to her. She had an uneasy sense that he was in some vague manner moving away from her and her influence.

"And it will not be till August," added Mrs. Westerley.

"I think he will be glad of the delay, and Mr. Edward Morton, too. He has almost taken possession of Hester since she came back."

"I am glad the poor fellow finds anything so pleasant to interest him. He has such high standards that any one, old or young, must be the better for his company." Then after some further chat the widow rose. "I must go," she said. "My love to Hester. Is she in?"

"No; she has gone to walk with Arthur. I asked them to leave a note at a Mrs. Grace's for my brother."

"Mrs. Grace?" exclaimed Alice, interrogatively, and surprised into undue curiosity.

"Yes. She sent to ask him to call on her this morning, and he had to write that he could not see her till the afternoon."

"She has had six doctors in a year, my dear Miss Ann, and she abuses them all in turn!"

"Dear me," said Ann, "I hope she won't abuse Ezra!"

Alice had her own views as to this, but she felt self-convicted of having mildly gossiped about a woman whom she detested, and she therefore held her peace and went away; still believing that, as regarded Mrs. Grace, it might be wise to put her friend the doctor on his guard.

Two days later, early in July, Arthur joined his regiment.

"Don't say good-by," begged Edward. "Slip away without it. You will be back and forth, I

suppose, and these good-bys in war times are too hard. Always one thinks anew of what may happen. I told Hester that you would n't be here again."

"But I must see her before I go, Ned. I came here out of uniform on purpose to see her."

"Out of uniform — Hum — I see — that's right. But really I would n't see her, if I were you. Just oblige me about this."

"But I hate to go off that way."

"I know; but she has, as is natural, Arty, a good deal of feeling about the war, and as she grows older it deepens, — and — altogether, I think I would just go away quietly."

"Well, Ned, I don't quite see it, and — well, I'll do as you say; but you 'll tell her, won't you?"

"Yes, dear old boy, I 'll tell her! After all, it can't be to her quite what it is to me; and yet even I would far rather say good-by now."

"Then good-by, Ned."

"Don't be foolishly rash, Arty; and God keep you!"

And so was said one of the million partings of the great war.

"Poor Ned!" murmured Arthur, feeling in his poetic young heart all that the staying at home meant for the gallant and high-minded gentleman left looking after him, as he walked up the street towards Mrs. Westerley's.

XIV.

Mrs. Grace was the middle-aged wife of a merchant, who had been first one of her father's clerks, and then, through much industry and indifference to anything but the begetting of dollars, his junior partner. Like many men who win success in cities, he had come from a country farm, and nothing was more remote from his visions, when he became a clerk, than the idea that, like the good apprentice, he might marry his master's daughter. But when he grew useful enough to be noticed, and to be asked as a younger partner to dine at Mr. Johnston's table, he fell an easy prey to the eldest daughter, who, having seen three sisters married in turn, felt that it was well to dismiss her hopes of position in favor of the ruddy-faced, rather stout young man, who was somewhat her junior. Mr. Johnston, who was not over prosperous, knew full well the value of Richard Grace, and realized the fact that he ran some danger of losing his energetic partner. It was true that his own family had been solid merchants, with an accepted social position, for three generations of absolute inactivity, except as to varied fortunes in getting and losing money; but then, social considerations could not be allowed, as he told his wife, to stand in the way of business,

and therefore in due time his daughter became Mrs. Grace, and had sons and daughters after her kind.

The husband became what such men always become. He prospered to a certain extent, and but for the many arrows in his quiver might have been called rich. He liked a quiet life; drank a little of a morning, a little more at bedtime; drove a fast horse late every afternoon, played euchre three times a week, read the Ledger, and believed in the Pennsylvania Railroad. There were two things in his life he disliked; one was that Colonel Fox, a distant cousin of his wife, was the relentless trustee of her small estate, which was bringing, in safe ground rents, six per cent. in place of the ten which her husband felt it would have brought in his own business; the other was his wife's tongue, and the consequences thereof. When he stayed at home on the off evenings of his euchre club, without lifting his eyes from his newspaper he said "yes — yes" at such intervals as a long experience had proved to him were reasonably competent to keep her in the belief that he was listening. They were in fact mutually unentertaining. As to what he did, or in what enterprises he engaged, she was in no wise concerned, nor did he himself conceive that these were matters in which a woman should have any share; while, unless her heedless talk brought him into trouble, and explanations became needful, he had long ceased to listen, even at meal-times. Nor was he much to blame. There was about her

mental operations a bewildering indefiniteness, which baffled the best bred attention; and when Mrs. Grace talked, what she was saying was as unlikely to have any relation to what she had said before as are the successive contents of a naturalist's trawl-net after deep-sea dredging. Her life had been a feeble acetous fermentation. Her position was less good than it had been. Her daughters had married out of what she considered her own proper sphere of social life; and altogether she had come by degrees to have a dull sense of being somehow wronged.

It was out of reason to expect such a person not to be critical of her more happy neighbors; but her criticism was after all less that of determined malice than the mere simmering of a slow intelligence, limited in its interests, and heated, or rather but merely warmed, by disappointment, which like everything else, she felt but vaguely. It is not, however, to be presumed that such women are inoperative in life. If they have ruled stolidly a stolid family, they acquire dangerous habits of self-assertion; and as obstinacy is the armor of dull minds, Mrs. Grace was apt, when attacked, to retreat within its shell, with changeless opinions. There are some stupid people, and certain antagonistic but clever people, who enjoy in their different ways the pleasure of holding theories, which they treat like spoilt children, and indulge at the social cost of others. Of such theories Mrs. Grace had her share. She had a high estimate of her insight

into maladies, dosed her helpless family a good deal, and expected to be heard with attention by her doctors, of whom, as a natural consequence, she had many. She disbelieved in vaccination, and had views as to the impropriety of experiments on animals, which may have arisen, as Mrs. Westerley said, from some mysterious defensive instinct as to transmutation in kind.

The Sanitary Commission was a great resource at present in Mrs. Grace's life, and late in the morning of the day she had sent for Wendell she entered the busy room of its local office with a sense of tranquil satisfaction. Here she found Ann Wendell, aided by Hester, busily engaged in inspecting and sorting undergarments intended to be sent to Pennsylvania regiments. Alice Westerley was occupied at a table with accounts, and two or three older and some younger women were sewing, or packing different articles.

Alice Westerley nodded to the new-comer, and the other women, who represented very various degrees of social life brought together by one purpose, spoke to her as she came in.

"What is there to-day?" she asked Miss Wendell.

"Oh, everything," replied Ann. "You might help Hester to pack these socks. This is Mrs. Grace, Hester. Make room for her, my dear."

"What a tall girl you are!" said Mrs. Grace, and knelt down, talking as she somewhat sluggishly helped to pack the box between them. "And you are Miss Wendell's niece, Hester?"

"No, I am not her niece."

"Oh, yes, I remember, — her ward."

"Oh, no, I am not that, either," answered the girl, whose instincts were quick and defensive.

"Now, I remember: Sarah — that 's my daughter — told me about you, and how your father was killed. And, you know, Sarah says you are engaged to Arthur Morton."

"I am not engaged to Mr. Arthur Morton!" exclaimed the girl, coloring as much with anger as with shame. "I am a young girl at school, and I do not see why any one should say such things about me."

"But you know you look eighteen, my dear, — quite eighteen. I suppose your dress — the way you are dressed — makes you look less young."

"I dare say I seem older than I am," said Hester.

"But you might be nineteen, to look at you. You know Dr. Wendell is to be my doctor."

"Indeed!" And Hester nervously crammed away rebellious socks into the unoccupied corners left by Mrs. Grace's clumsy stowage.

"I sent for him because he believes in malaria."

Hester was silent, and so aroused Mrs. Grace's dull suspicions.

"He does believe in malaria, does n't he? — I mean in Germantown. Dr. Mason says it 's nonsense; but then I never have agreed with him. He did say, though, that Sarah had malaria, and after all it was measles; but I think measles is

malaria," she added, with a sense of trimphant logic. "There must be an awful amount of malaria on the Potomac."

"I hardly think I know anything about it," returned Hester, and went on packing, her thoughts meanwhile far away with Arty and the war; for even the poorest husbandman may effectively sow seed.

"I should say Arthur Morton would be a right good match for almost any girl," observed Mrs. Grace, with her amazing capacity for dangerous digression.

Hester looked down resolutely, wondering if the woman could know what thoughts were in her mind. The simple purity of a nature trembling at the gates of womanhood was disgusted and disturbed at this rude criticism of her most pleasant relations in life.

But Mrs. Westerley, having ended her work, was standing over them, and had overheard the last sentence.

"You are packing very badly, Hester," she said, which was true. "Leave that to Mrs. Grace, and come and copy this list."

Hester rose, with a look of relief, and went to the desk.

"Oh, Mrs. Westerley," she whispered, "what a dreadful person!"

"Yes, my child, but never mind."

Then Mrs. Grace investigated Ann Wendell's views as to vaccination, and was gently amazed to

find that Ann had no particular views at all on this matter. Not so, however, Miss Clemson, her neighbor, a tall young woman, with a thin, pugnacious nose, and a mind quite too satisfactorily logical to be attractive to the common masculine mind, which finds a mysterious gratification in the indefiniteness of young women.

"Vaccination?" she said distinctly, while the surrounding persons looked up with the pleased sense of something amusing in prospect, — "vaccination? Have you ever made a study of the subject? That is, have you ever really inquired into the statistics?" She spoke with a clear and deliberate articulation.

"No; but I have my opinions."

"You say *No*. Is that a negation of the value of vaccination? Because you must be aware," she continued blandly, "that that would be a mere repetition of what you have just stated. Now, an accurate examination of the statistics of variola" —

"Of what?" asked Mrs. Grace.

"Of variola," repeated Miss Clemson, not stopping to explain — "would show that before Jenner's time" —

"Oh, I know!" interrupted Mrs. Grace. "I have seen all that in the papers, over and over; but I need not say that that does n't satisfy me. I think you will find Dr. Wendell agrees with me. Is n't it so, Miss Wendell?"

Ann kept silence. She did not know anything about it, except that her brother did vaccinate peo-

ple ; and also, it may be added, the wisdom and great good of holding her tongue had been borne in upon her, as she said, with effective clearness.

As she paused, unwilling to reply, Alice Westerley, perceiving her difficulty, said, smiling, "And of course you do not have your own children vaccinated?"

"My children are vaccinated because Richard would have it. Richard is just too awfully obstinate. Sarah says 'he 's a regular *pièce de résistance*.' I 've mostly forgotten my French, but I guess that 's about what he is. But that does n't change my mind."

Alice Westerley and Miss Clemson exchanged furtive glances of amusement, and one young woman fled, convulsed with suppressed laughter, into the back storeroom.

At last Miss Clemson attained sufficient composure to murmur, "Oh, of course not ; but perhaps you might agree with him if you were to read Dr. Jenner's original treatise."

"Oh, I presume you 've read it," said Mrs. Grace.

"Yes, I have," returned Miss Clemson, simply. In fact, there were few things she had not read about, and her memory made her a dangerous opponent.

"Won't you ask for labels, Mrs. Grace?" said Alice, wishing to stop the talk, and longing for a solitary laugh.

Mrs. Grace rose heavily, and saying, "No one

should vaccinate me," went into a back room in search of the desired articles.

"I do not think I envy Dr. Wendell, Miss Ann," began an indiscreet miss at her side. "They say she has a doctor every two months, and that" —

"Hush," exclaimed Alice Westerley; "don't let 's talk gossip here. We are getting to be as bad as a Dorcas meeting!"

"Was that gossip, Mrs. Westerley?" asked the young person. "I thought anybody could talk about doctors."

"Doctors!" said Alice, laughing, — "doctors, indeed! You know that you were not discussing doctors!"

"Mrs. Westerley is right," added Miss Clemson. "There is no need to talk about persons at all, Susie."

"But were n't you talking about a Dr. Jenner?" replied the young person, calmly triumphant.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Miss Clemson.

"And what did I say?" went on Miss Susan; and there was a burst of laughter, which cleared the air, and amidst which Hester and Miss Wendell went away with the widow.

Then Mrs. Grace returned to the room, having been unable to find the labels, "And would n't Miss Susie find them?" which enabled that young person to drop her work, and chatter with a clerk and two other maidens in the back room.

"What were you all laughing at?" questioned Mrs. Grace, all unexplained mirth being suspiciously unpleasant to her.

"We were laughing at one of those chatterbox girls," returned Miss Clemson.

"Oh, was that all? And where is Alice Westerley?" said Mrs. Grace, who by no means indulged in so naming that lady when present, but who had no objection to the varied circle within earshot supposing her to be on terms of intimacy with the widow. Mrs. Grace was beginning to feel quite decisively the effects of that gradual fall from a good position which is so common a feature of American life, and which had already begun to show in her parents. In colonial days her people had won much money, and with it the chance of culture; but, as old Mr. Wilmington said, they were like some wines, and did n't take kindly to fining. In another generation they would disappear socially, having failed in the competitions of our uneasy life. Mrs. Grace had in fact an indistinct sense of lapsing from her rank, and her children were still sinking, and did not care about it, or perhaps as yet did not feel it.

"Don't you think our Sanitary should have a new president, since Mrs. Morton does n't appear to come back?" asked this lady.

"I cannot see why," replied Miss Clemson. "Mrs. Westerley is vice-president, and that answers every purpose."

"And a good one," assented Mrs. Bullock, a motherly woman in the corner, ceasing to count the pile of garments before her. "We should only just change her title, if we made her president, and of course we could not elect any one else."

That was not at all Mrs. Grace's idea. She herself had dimly felt aspirations after office, but she had sense enough to say, "Oh, yes, of course not," which was sufficient; and then she added, "And where is Miss Wendell?"

"Gone with Mrs. Westerley."

"Oh! They do say she is going to marry that doctor."

"Who do say?" queried Miss Clemson; "and who is to marry who?"

"Oh, several say. You know he 's there all the time; and for my part I do not see how a young woman like that can be so imprudent as to have an unmarried man for her doctor."

"Is she ever ill?" asked the matron in the corner.

"Oh, I suppose so, or why should he go there?"

"I should not believe that he went there at all, at least without proof. How often does he go there, Mrs. Grace?" It was a question for investigation with Miss Clemson. She was too accurate for perfect manners, but was nevertheless well bred.

"I suppose you would n't doubt my word?"

"Oh, no," replied Miss Clemson, who was in a high state of disgust, "not your word; only your power of observation, or perhaps your talent for arithmetic. When people are slandered, I like to ask for proofs."

Mrs. Grace was silent a moment, but a rosy young woman came to her aid, who showed already

a reasonable promise of being in middle life a bore of great inertia, having the gift of indefinitely explaining minute commonplaces, and being, as yet, so pretty that her face was a bribe to some measure of endurance. "I think Mrs. Grace means that when a doctor goes very often, and when you know he is a young man, and when you see he is handsome, — why, I think it must make a difference."

Miss Clemson beat an impatient tattoo on the table with her thimbled forefinger.

Then Mrs. Grace announced with emphasis, as if she had really thought it all over, "Yes, it must make a difference. It must make a great difference."

"I don't think," remarked Mrs. Bullock, "that I understand quite."

"Who could!" cried Miss Clemson. "But this much I understand: that Mrs. Grace desires us to believe that there is some impropriety in Mrs. Westerley being attended, when ill, by Dr. Wendell. I hope Mrs. Grace will not feel hurt if I say that all this kind of gossip is dangerous."

"You are right," said Mrs. Bullock, who felt that, true or not, it was hardly the kind of talk to which young girls should be made to listen.

"All of which does n't change my opinion," put in Mrs. Grace.

"And are you quite willing I should tell Mrs. Westerley?" asked Miss Clemson.

"Good gracious, no!" returned Mrs. Grace. "Why should any one tell her?"

"Then why," continued Miss Clemson, "need any one say such things? I hate gossip; it is always inaccurate."

"Oh, I don't think Mrs. Grace meant to gossip," exclaimed the forward young person from her corner.

"I never gossip," said Mrs. Grace, "but I have my own opinions."

"Then let us all have our own opinions, and keep them, like other precious things, to ourselves," returned Miss Clemson, wearily. "Where are those labels, Susie?"

If any one had told Mrs. Grace that she was maliciously sowing a slander, it would have surprised that lady. She was simply saying what came uppermost, and her mind, as Arty once said, was "like our Christmas grab-bag: you never knew what you would pull out." Nevertheless, she had done some evil, ignorantly or not, and evil has a feline tenacity of life.

For the present no more came of it than that Mrs. Bullock, who had overheard Mrs. Grace's talk with Hester, thought it well to say to Mrs. Westerley something about the strong desire they all felt that Mrs. Grace should by no good-nature of Mrs. Westerley be allowed to become the head of their branch of the Commission.

"Rest easy, my dear," said the widow; "not while I am alive."

"She ought to be shut up," returned the matron. "I do think, Mrs. Westerley, there are some people

in the penitentiary who have done less harm in their lives. You should have heard her talk to Hester Gray about being engaged to young Morton! It was simply disgusting, and" —

"No doubt," broke in Alice, "but I do not think she really wants to hurt anybody. For my part, I hardly care to hear what she said, and for that reason I interrupted you. You won't mind my interrupting you, but I am really ashamed to confess that sometimes what that woman says has the power to make me unreasonably angry."

"Well, it's all right. I had nothing else to say." This was hardly more true than Mrs. Grace's gossip; but the speaker was glad to have had time to reflect, and had hastily concluded that what she had meant to add further were best left unsaid.

The summer sped away, and the war went on its unrelenting course as Grant drew tighter his paralyzing lines around Petersburg, and the wearied rebel army struggled with the vigor of a brave race against men as gallant and more numerous; while to the little circle of friends Arthur's frequent and clever letters brought a new and anxious interest in this dreadful death-wrestle.

Hester was changing in a way that surprised Ann Wendell, and both surprised and interested Alice. By degrees the effects of her former dreary school life and the subsequent sense of isolation, as well as the shock and terror of her father's death, were wearing off. For a long while, and more and

more as with larger knowledge she realized this novel experience of a death, its memory oppressed the girl at times; but time is stronger in the young than any memories, however sad, and Hester was now exhibiting such joy of happy thoughtlessness as belongs of pleasant right to her age.

Alice Westerley saw plainly that Hester showed, as she grew older, a little too much tendency to be her own mistress, — a fault which was due rather to the early lack of firm home training than to any uneradicable peculiarity in Hester's mental or moral structure. The widow, like Mrs. Morton, had also her doubts as to whether Ann Wendell was exactly the person to mould or manage a light-hearted girl of resolute nature, and felt a certain anxiety as to whether Hester was to look for permanent help from Henry Gray, or was to be dependent upon her own exertions. It was best, she thought, to assume that the latter was to be the case; but yet it was not in Alice's kindly nature to be able to feel that so young and joyous a creature should be on this account made to know too early the bitterness of having to look forward into a future of self-sustaining labor among absolute strangers. She would at least take her to Newport, and see, as she said. Meanwhile she wrote to Henry Gray, who was like a bird on the wing for restlessness, and who for some reason made no reply.

Yet whatever were Alice's doubts and fears, there were none now for Hester, nor for Edward Morton. His health was still infirm, and likely to

be so for life; but even his occasional pain and sleeplessness only tended to make him more and more dependent upon Hester's gentle help.

They had gone out together for an afternoon drive, which meant usually a little wandering about through lanes and by-roads behind a lazy old horse, which they hitched to a fence now and then, while they gathered flowers, or looked for grubs and beetles, or watched ant-heaps by the hour. Hester had thus come to know by degrees the beauty of that charming neighborhood, happily preserved to-day by the Park inclosures; and it was a fresh delight when her friend could show her some new lane, or discuss with her, book in hand and map on knee, their doubts as to the track of Revolutionary armies, or with equal interest the family name of a fern or a butterfly. They were both somewhat silent, as they drove lazily along, on this their last summer afternoon together, until at last Edward said, smiling, "Queer, is n't it, Hester, that as this is our last chance for a good gabble we should both be mum as mice! Let us improve the occasion, as Miss Ann's preacher says. Look down the river. What a leaf crop there is this year!"

They crossed the Schuylkill at the Falls' Bridge, and passed southward along the bank, until at last the young man said, "We will try the hill here, Hester. I want to show you something; but I shall need help. Give me my stick, and let us go slowly, and halt as often as the Potomac army."

Then, tardily enough, — for he walked with diffi-

culty, — they crossed the Reading railroad, and climbed up a narrow, sunken lane, brier-set and dark with sumach and dogwood. "We are on the old inclined plane of the railway, Hester," he said, as he paused for breath near the summit. "And this is our way, here, to the right;" and so saying he broke through a close, wild hedge of alders and judas-trees, and turned with pleasure to see the joy of the eager young face at his side. Before them lay a rolling bit of grass land, bounded on three sides by forest, much as it is to-day; not far away rose a green hillside, above a gray stone spring house, and to their right, in the woods, a brook chuckled merrily noisy answers to the dauntless catbirds, who love the wood edges, and the wood robin, who likes its darkened depths. The trees about them stirred the girl's unaffected love of nature. "These be honest gentlemen," said Edward, standing bareheaded. Three matchless tulip poplars, stateliest of trees, rose serene, with moveless shining leaves, beside the more feminine graciousness of a group of maples, perfect as to form and densely clad in August greenery. "Ah, Hester," he said, "you who love trees should say a prayer for him who spared these noble fellows. But here is my spring. This is what we came to see."

At an angle of the wood was a quiet little pool of cold water, set about with narrow slabs of marble stained with the fallen leafage of many an autumn. In its depths pink willow rootlets, which our boys call foxtails, were tangled with the white

roots of a sturdy maple, which rose in wholesome strength above the surrounding trees. Hester knelt down, and, smiling, saw her face set in the brown mirror's little square of mottled sun and shade.

As she looked, Edward stood over her, and she saw his face in the still spring, beside her own. She laughed prettily, and bent over to drink; but looked up as she touched the water. "I have drunk you all up, Mr. Edward!" she cried, still laughing. Edward shrank back. Disease had made the once strong young man unnaturally sensitive and nervous. He remembered the story of this little forest well, and how once a fair maiden, drinking here, like this girl, had seen of a sudden, beside her own face, that of a man; and how she had come to love that sombre face; and how in after years its owner had wrecked her life, and betrayed his country in its darkest hour.

Hester arose, seeing the trouble in her friend's face.

"What is it?" she asked, "What is the matter?"

"Nothing," he returned hastily. "A little tired, I suppose."

He wondered, indeed, at the strange stir and tumult in himself. Not for the world would he have told her that grim legend of Arnold's well. "Come away!" he exclaimed. "Let us see what there is in our bag. I am all right now. We have a lot of jolly queer things. How the doctor will like it! I sometimes wonder now, Hester, how I could ever

have so despaired of life. What helpful things books are! Don't you marvel what sick folks did in the Middle Ages? I mean poor devils of half-sick folks, like me."

"I think," said the girl, doubtfully, "they must have looked even more at the skies and the flowers than we do; but I don't know, really. If I were sick, I should n't be as patient as you. Mrs. Westerley tells me I am sometimes impatient, now."

"But why does she say that?"

"Indeed, I don't know. No, I hardly mean that: I do know very well! She scolded me a little yesterday, and I suppose I was n't quite as meek as I ought to have been. But I have promised to be so awfully good at Newport!"

"Little scamp! It 's a nice place for you to begin a career of goodness. I would n't trust you!"

"Yes, you would! I should n't like it if you ceased to trust me. Oh, there is a droll-looking bug! I wonder what it is!"

"Let the bugs alone, little friend, and come and sit down. I am mortally tired."

Then the girl found that perhaps she too was tired, which was scarcely the case; but she was tenderly thoughtful with and for Edward.

"Let us read Arthur's letter," she suggested. "I have been saving it, as Miss Ann says, for 'gooding.'"

"What a nice old English word! There 's a stump for me, and you can lie on the grass. And now for dear old Arty," said Edward, as he cast a

pleased look at Hester, who was opening Arthur's letter with that dainty care which, to a more experienced observer than her companion, might have gone far to tell her modest secret.

As he looked down upon her, a thought came to him of the contrast between her vigorous and growing life and his own increasing feebleness; and, looking up, Hester saw him gazing past her, dreaming. What meaning there was in the profound sadness of his eyes she did not comprehend; but seeing the sadness, was by instinct moved with some sweet womanly equality of mere emotion.

"What is it, Mr. Edward?" she said.

"Nothing, dear," he answered; but there was a look of grievous defeat about the young man, and when, in after-years, Hester stood before the stricken lion of Lucerne, some remembrance of her hour at the spring, beneath the maples, came back to her, and with eyes full of tears she turned away. "Don't mind me," he continued; "go on. What does the living say to the dead, Hester?"

"Nonsense!" she answered cheerfully. "That does n't sound like you. You are worth some dozen of certain live folks I know."

"Then your acquaintance must have queer limitations. What does he say?"

"Mr. Arthur says," she replied, carefully spreading out the letter on her lap, — "he says" —

"But why do you say 'Mr. Arthur'?"

"Oh, I am practicing," said Hester, with a wicked demureness of repressed fun. "That was

what Mrs. Westerley lectured me about yesterday."

"No! not really? Why, she is worse than mamma."

"Yes. She orders authoritatively that I am to call you both 'Mr. Morton.' Mrs. Westerley does not approve of the way young girls have of calling men by their first names. Do you understand?"

Edward whistled. "And when does it begin?"

"Oh, I begged off till I come back. I said it would n't seem so sudden then."

"I shall be told to call you Miss Gray, next."

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes! Why not?"

"But I won't like that, at all! I won't have it; and Arty — he" —

"Wait a little, my dear; you don't know Mrs. Alice. She will have her way, you will find; and as to 'Won't,' — you know what happened to him?"

"Yes, I know. But I like him well; and I like all his family, — 'Sha'n't,' and 'Can't,' and the rest."

"A bad connection, Miss Gray," he said, smiling. "But what about Arty? — Mr. Morton, I should say."

"Mr. Morton says: —

"DEAR QUEEN ESTHER [that 's for short, I fancy], — I suppose the newspapers tell you all about us in general; more, in fact, than we know ourselves. Fox swears like cur army in Flanders

(every one swears in the army, — except me) when the reporters come to our bivouac. And, by the bye, tell Ned to send me some onions and a little old Rye. Don't forget the onions. He knows where there 's some at home. I mean Rye. Yesterday we had a little relief from this endless drill and loafing. The colonel gives us no peace about drilling. There was an alarm at daybreak, and we had a sharp affair with a — [something — it is blotted out] Confederate regiment." (He had written Carolina, but remembering what eyes were to see it had erased the number and State, which would have told Hester that it was her father's old regiment.)

"Fox had a near thing of it, and I was twice in among their guns. Had to come out again in a hurry. I thought of" —

Here the girl paused, confused.

"Oh, I know," said Edward. "He thought of me. Go on; I can stand it!"

Hester looked down. "I thought of my dear Ned, and knowing how much better a soldier he would have made than I, wished he might have been with me. But don't think I like it at all. Any one who says they like it is stupid, or lies. I don't. I never realized until now how dreadful is war; but I think I know that I ought to be here, and why. Yet when a fellow is in the thick of one of these mad rushes at death through smoke, there is something of a wild joy about it. At all events, it does one some good. That is, it does the decent

fellows good. It seems to me I am older by years in these few months; but then, for people who think at all, there is time and material here for thinking, and much to learn about war out of books on tactics, and so on, with practical lessons at intervals. Edward, who was always the boldest man I know, keeps writing me not to accept needless peril. Tell him I do not mean to. It is really necessary sometimes for officers to expose themselves as examples, when men are shaky, but not often. I think of it now because that was just what Fox did yesterday. We are all lying down, or in shelter, having made a stand after what came near being a stampede; and what does Fox do but begin to walk up and down, with a cigarette in his mouth, pretending to be using his field-glass. I got up as he passed me, and said, 'Let me do that, sir;' and what did he say but 'Lie down, or you 'll get hit; and when you address me, sir, be good enough to salute.' And the balls were as thick as mosquitoes in a Jersey marsh. Oh, Hester, one must see a man in the *ennui* of camp, and then in the field, to know him. It seems to me that what I have heard Dr. Lagrange say of disease is true of war. It ruins some men morally, and some it makes nobler, — like my brother Ned!"

"Oh, Mr. Edward, is n't that just like Arty!" said Hester, pausing.

"Arty is a dear old goose about me," returned Edward. "He thinks I am a patient martyr, but he does n't know how much I have wriggled at the stake."

"I have everything, I think," went on Hester, rising, and standing thoughtfully before him, the letter in her hand, — "everything; but I am not as patient as you who have so little."

"You can't count another man's wealth, child. I have my little Hester, and this August day, and these woods, and all the strange world I am peeping into."

"Yes, I know," murmured Hester, softly, the morn of womanhood, that was waking under the fading dusk of childish indifferences to the larger trials of life, beginning to glow with warmth of appreciative feeling.

"It is n't bad for any one to know how much he is a help in other folks' lives," continued Edward. "It makes him better, too, I dare say. And now for more help. Give me a hand, — now a good pull. I must heft pretty heavy, as Miss Ann says. We 'll keep the rest of Arty's letter for to-night. There seems to be a lot of it, and it is late. I hope my horse has kept quiet. I wish he was nearer; I am pretty tired."

The next day Hester went to Newport, whence she wrote to Edward often, and to Arthur rarely. Alice perceived well enough where this close intimacy of two attractive young folks might end, but scarcely saw how to lessen the danger; and now, feeling more and more that she disliked the responsibility, she wrote to Mrs. Morton quite frankly, but only to learn that Morton would not return until he was fit for duty, and that of course she, Mrs. Morton, did not fancy the idea of a match

of this kind at all, and knew Alice would discourage whatever might make it a possible event — all of which left Mrs. Westerley quite as helpless and more anxious than before, and not much comforted by this final phrase of her friend's letter.

"For after all," she wrote, "I dare say you are mistaken; and then young men always have one or two affairs of this kind. They are pretty bad for a girl, I think, but they do not hurt men," — which to Alice, who was very much attached to Hester, seemed on the whole to partake rather strongly of the selfishness of maternal affection, and to be a little too like Helen Morton, who was apt to think first of her own children, and in their relations to others of them alone.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Westerley, as she found, had her hands full at Newport, where she had many friends, and where it was difficult always to leave Hester out of the constant social engagements of that charming place.

"Luckily," she wrote to Mrs. Morton, "most of the nicer young men are where they should be, at the war; but there are enough and too many older lads, on their vacation holidays; and even with your ideas and mine, it is hard to keep this very gay young lady from seeing that she is admired, and from being disappointed because I do not allow her to go about as she does at Germantown."

Nevertheless, Hester enjoyed this new life, and saw enough of men, old and young, in Mrs. Westerley's drawing-room to widen her horizon as to the general opinion of Miss Gray.

With some little interior mutiny of criticism, Hester came to yield tranquilly enough to her friend's social discipline, and to observe that among the class of girls she saw and found pleasant, the most of them were quite as much controlled as she. Then she began, as Alice delayed leaving Newport, to enjoy still more the refined culture of its lingering lovers, and to return with fresh zest to outdoor enjoyments.

"Now," she wrote to Wendell, "there is, as it were, a new spring, — just as if the flowers had come again to say good-by; and there are golden-rods above the beaches, and little dandelions, smaller than in spring, are here (I don't think they are true dandelions, but I left my Gray's Botany at home); and then there is a purple flower, which an old lady told me was the Michaelmas daisy. I think it is an aster, and so pretty; and what the people call freckled alders, with red berries. And oh, you should see the cliffs, and the sea! I never saw it before, and now it seems like an old friend; and if I only had you and Arty and Edward, I should be just too happy. But why does n't Arty write? We have ceased to hear at all."

Arty had other business on hand, and was in the thick of the savage fighting that resulted in the destruction of the Weldon railroad, and of which news soon reached his anxious friends at the North. Late in September Mrs. Westerley returned to her home, and Hester went back, with no great satisfaction, to her school life.

XV.

For Wendell and his sister the winter brought little visible change. The great plan for an essay on American diseases somehow faded away, and was as yet without a successor. Dr. Lagrange had, however, been ordered from the hospital, and a new and alert volunteer surgeon, with his head full of improvements, was making it uncomfortable for Wendell; so that his hours had to be rearranged, and he felt that it would be much more pleasant to be free from the shackles of even as little army discipline as his relations to a hospital involved.

Ann, of course, altogether disapproved of a resignation by her brother. The money loss of eighty dollars a month seemed to her a very serious matter; but to Wendell his personal convenience was far more important, and overruled for the time all other considerations. He was cautious not to allow his sister to suspect that, beside the difficulty she found in meeting their daily expenses, — for Ann allowed no bills to accumulate unpaid, — he was annoyed by the results of his own folly in buying new lenses and expensive books, and now and then some rare engraving.

Had young Morton understood the true state of things, he would have been quick to aid his friends;

but he knew that he paid them liberally for the home and the care that they gave him, and as Wendell never considered or talked about what things cost, and Ann was too proudly self-sustaining to allow of a stranger seeing her growing necessities, Edward lived on without suspicion, and was the more likely to be free from it because he had always been so lifted above money cares that the possibility of them was the last thing he would have been likely to think about.

It was well into January when Ann said to her brother, "I am sorry to trouble you, brother Ezra, — I know how you dislike it, — but I must have more money. I save what I can, but Mr. Edward needs all sorts of luxuries. I did think that when Hester was so nicely provided for, we should go along more comfortably."

"I don't see where the money all goes, Ann," he returned helplessly. "I am sure I spend very little."

"Are you certain of that, Ezra? There was that microscope, and" —

"Oh, Ann, am I never to hear the last of that microscope!"

"And those new lenses, — were n't they very dear?"

"No. I can always sell them for what they cost. A good lens is just like gold."

"But that cyclopædia."

"A man really must have the tools of his profession, Ann; and I gave up all idea of the carriage."

Ann groaned. "I do wish I could help you more. I sometimes think I am of less use to you than I was" —

Being a woman, and therefore automatically sacrificial, she could not estimate the immense proportion of energy she thrust, somehow, into his daily life, nor recall, in her self-negation, how often she remembered his engagements, or urged him to leave his microscope to face the winds of a cold night to make some professional visit which he would next day have found an easy excuse for having left unpaid. The wonder was that he did not seem to recognize the force that helped to give to his intelligence, which was competent enough, what practical utility was possible for it. Of course there are many failures in such relationships, and despite her watchful interest Wendell's professional life was far from reaching an ideal standard of efficient duty.

"You are of great use to me always," he said; "and as to the money, I have many good bills, and I can jog the memory of one or two patients. Now there is Jones."

He made things so easy with his comfortable out-look that Ann was satisfied for the time, or appeared to be.

"You won't forget?" she entreated.

"No."

"Ezra, is your practice growing?"

"I — I guess so. I am told I have been unusually successful, for a new-comer. People do leave

one, you know; but that is what every man has to expect. They say a doctor's whole practice changes every ten years."

"That seems strange to me," remarked Ann. "If ever I needed to have a doctor, I should n't want to change him."

"Well, people do," returned Ezra.

In fact, he had been fortunate. At the time we speak of, certain country neighborhoods were suffering for want of physicians, a good many men who were just on the borders of success in practice having been tempted into army service; so that those who, like Wendell, stayed at home sometimes profited by the opportunities thus left open. The Mortons were pleased with his services, and Mrs. Westerley, although of late she had become guarded in mentioning him, had often enough spoken freely of his skill; so that he had picked up a fair number of well-to-do patients, who felt that the new doctor was to be taken more or less on trial. As time went on he lost a larger proportion of such patients than he should have done. He was in every way an agreeable and amusing visitor, but when he had to sustain the courage of the sick and satisfy watchful friends through grave illness he failed. For some reason, he did not carry confidence to others; perhaps because he was unable to hide his mental unstableness, which showed in too frequent changes of opinion. Moreover, his love of ease made impossible for him the never-ending daily abandonment of this moment of quiet, or that little bit of

tranquil home life, which every wise physician counts upon once for all as a part of the discomforts which he must accept if he means to win success. Some men overestimate what they give, and think little of what they get in return. Wendell liked to believe that his professional life was made up of sacrifices; so that when a patient left him, and sent for another more decisive attendant, he felt a certain foolish resentment, into which the notion of ingratitude entered, and which made him regard with bitterness his more lucky successor. Let us add that Alice Westerley, whose interest in him was fatally growing, was, as to all these matters, an unfortunate friend. She was quite too widely sympathetic to be a good moral tonic, and knew really too little of his less interesting qualities to acquire the sad conviction that he was designed by nature to illustrate, soon or late, the certainty of failure where, although the machine be competent, its driving power is inadequate.

But a man must be very blind indeed not to recognize sometimes that he is drifting from the course he meant to take, and Wendell was, as I have said, by no means defective in intellect. There come to most of us, in fact, times of unpleasant illumination, when we are forced to see things as they would appear to an uninterested or abler observer; but some men are always so near their moral mirror that their breath obscures the image they ought to see. The talk with Ann made her brother unhappy for a time, and brought upon him

one of the dark moods which she so much dreaded; nor indeed was he otherwise without good cause for unhappiness. From time to time he had borrowed small sums from Edward Morton, whose generosity made it so easy that somehow the weight of this gathering debt seemed to Wendell to be of little importance. But there was another matter which was of graver moment. Wendell had, after some doubt as to what was best, taken Wilmington's advice, and invested in his own name, as trustee, the ten thousand dollars deposited in his hands by Henry Gray. The investment being in government bonds at a low rate, their rise towards the year 1865 made the doctor feel that there was a comfortable margin of profit, which with the passage of time must enlarge. At first, he set this aside, as belonging to Hester; but by and by, as his own difficulties increased, he began to think that he was entitled, as Gray had, no doubt, meant him to be, to some share in her good fortune. There was reason in this, but Wendell did not take the first positive practical step without moral discomfort, nor until urged to it by unrelenting circumstances. His own and his sister's inheritance amounted to but six thousand dollars, and was invested in a well-secured mortgage which Mr. Wilmington had recommended, and in fact found for him. The rise in Hester's securities fatally tempted him to seek for some more brilliant return from his own and Ann's little property, and after much hesitation he bought stock in a Western road which

had been rapidly rising in price. The January dividend, however, had not been paid, and the stock had fallen. Then, at last, when Ann asked him for the usual semi-annual interest on their mortgage, which habitually he resigned to her entire for her household uses, he found himself in trouble. If, says a monkish adage, you let a thin devil slip through the key-hole, a fat devil will unlock the door.

I should do an interesting but weak nature a wrong to presume that it cost him nothing to reason himself into borrowing enough of Hester's capital to enable him to give to Ann the money she had habitually received. The rebel cousin had meant to give his relation a certain sum, but owing to Wendell's wise investment it now much exceeded that amount. The excess seemed almost as much his as Hester's. It was characteristic of him that he put in his little tin box of private papers an acknowledgment of the amount thus transferred, but soon he found it convenient to add to it a second receipt; and these papers were, in some fashion, a comfort to the troubled man, who by habit dwelt within an ever-widening horizon of hopeful possibilities, as inexhaustible as the growing zone of successive mornings. Like all who tread this evil path, he honestly meant to replace what he took, and nothing could have surpassed the force of his conviction that he would do so; indeed, to have been told that he would not would have been felt by him as the deepest insult.

Meanwhile, he went about his work with a certain renewal of vigor, and found time to see Alice Westerley often. She had begun to be present in his day dreams as one of the brighter planets that were slowly rising above that horizon of which we have spoken. To do him full justice, he never thought of her in relation to money. This would have been unlike his gentle and poetic temperament. He of course knew that she had means, but how great he did not know, and he timidly approached her in a growing tenderness of relation which his sister did not suspect, and which he himself was very slowly coming to apprehend might result in something still more tender.

Early in March Miss Pearson's school broke up, on account of fever in the neighborhood, and Hester was sent away in haste, while the doctor was called on to settle a number of bills for her clothing and tuition.

Nevertheless, he was sincerely glad to see her, for at each return home she was a novel and charming surprise to the little circle.

"A butterfly, indeed!" exclaimed Edward Morton. "Could any one have imagined Hester would develop into such a noble-looking woman!"

Ann, who had followed with her eyes the retreating figure, with its straight carriage and walk of liberal strength, said quietly: —

"Indeed, the girl has grown." Ann had a sense of odd uneasiness at the sight of this suddenly completed transformation. What should she do with

her? Then the girl reappeared, happy at the escape from school.

"Won't some one walk with me to Mrs. Westerley's?" she asked. "Come, uncle, you have nothing to do."

Wendell had something to do, but it was not in him to say no.

"Come," he said.

"And don't forget Mrs. Grace," remarked Ann.

"No, of course not."

"And now, uncle," cried Hester, clinging to his arm, "how is everybody? And why does n't my cousin write? And how is Mr. Arthur? And you, — last and best, — how are you?"

"If you go on, I shall want an index to your inquiries," laughed Wendell. "Cousin Gray is probably engaged in the laudable occupation of blockade running," he added.

"And why not laudable?" queried Hester, who had found, during the last school term, another Carolinian, stranded like herself among what the better instructed young woman called with emphasis "those Yankees." "I am sure you will understand why I must have my own feelings about the South. But I think you always did understand."

"Yes, yes, dear, well enough," he said; "but don't talk more than you can help about the war. It makes trouble, in these days."

"No," she replied, looking up at him, and lightly pressing his arm, "that would be disloyal to you. I am a featherhead, Miss Pearson says, and Mrs.

Westerley lectures me; but there are some things I can never forget, — never! What a stupid child I must have been, when Miss Ann took me home! — and it seems such a home now! But as I grow older, I think about my father's death, and Miss Ann's kindness and yours come back to me, and I now know what an unusual and noble thing you did. Ah, I know it well now!"

"I think I have heard a little of this before from a certain young woman," said Wendell, who liked but yet was always embarrassed by praise.

"Yes, I know; but a certain young woman is certain she can never say all that she feels about it."

"Let it be, then," he said, tenderly, "as of a service from" — and he paused a moment; he was about to say "an uncle," but, looking aside at her face turned towards him in its stir of feeling, why did the nominal relationship he assumed seem all of a sudden absurd? Then he amended his phrase, "Like a brother's service; to be remembered, not paid for with thanks."

"I wish I could say things as prettily as you do! Mr. Arthur says it is because you have a poet's temperament."

"Arty is a stupid boy," returned the doctor, not displeased.

"But then," cried the girl, laughing merrily, and pretending for a moment to survey him critically, "you are too old for a brother. I should like one about Mr. Edward's age. I should n't like old brothers."

Wendell felt that at thirty-two it was rather hard to be doomed to senility by those pretty lips.

"Well," he said, after they had chatted somewhat longer about the Mortons, and had stopped to look at and to unroll the varnished covers of some horse-chestnut buds, "here is Mrs. Westerley's, and I shall appeal from slandering youth to the charity of a woman as to the awful question of my antiquity."

"I don't think Mrs. Westerley will agree with me; at least, she never does," returned Hester, demurely. She had heard a little about the two friends, perhaps, and had not left unused her own uncomfortably keen powers of observation. Decidedly, Miss Gray was growing in many ways!

"I will join you," he remarked, "after I have seen Mrs. Grace."

"Oh, is that dreadful lady alive yet?" exclaimed Hester.

"Did you suppose that I had killed her by this time?" he returned.

"If I were her doctor," said Hester, merrily, "it would be, 'Short her shrift, and soon her lift!'"

"What a depth of wickedness," he said, "and so young, too!" and, laughing, he left her at Mrs. Westerley's gate.

Mrs. Grace's drawing-room, as she liked to call her parlor, was filled with a sad inheritance of sepulchral grimness in the way of mahogany furniture

of the fashion of some fifty years back. Her daughters and herself had striven in vain to induce Mr. Grace to replace it with something of more modern form; but black haircloth and brass nails do not wear out, and, as he said, "What is the use, Martha, of new furniture, when this is perfectly good?" Efforts had been made to hide it with tidies of divers workmanship, but the mournful sheen of the haircloth, polished by much sitting, remained, and no art could conceal the sombre scrolls of sofa and chair back, which Alice Westerley said looked as if they had been put up in primeval curl-papers before the flood. The paint was a little dingy, and on the wall-paper, which was recent and much gilded, were hung two prints: one of the death-bed of Daniel Webster; the other of Henry Clay, in evening costume, addressing a morbidly attentive Senate. "Daniel Webster was a friend of our family," explained Mrs. Grace to a too critical young person, "and then my husband is such a tariff man, you know."

Wendell looked around with a sensitive shudder, and, gasping in the blast of dry heat from a furnace, began to wonder why the opening from which it came should have been called a register.

"I give it up," he muttered to himself, as Mrs. Grace entered the room.

Sarah was not well, and it must be malaria. Did not Dr. Wendell think it was malaria? He did not, but he knew by this time that it was unwise to dispute Mrs. Grace's opinions, and also useless.

He therefore advised her impassive and sallow daughter to eat less and walk more, and prescribed some one of the mild remedies which neither help nor hurt; and then Sarah was dismissed, and Mrs. Grace, now that she had him alone, began to take a little real comfort out of his visit in the shape of a flow of disconnected talk, made up of inquiries as to other people's maladies and her own complaints. Wendell had a reasonable habit of reticence about patients, but it was not very easy to escape this practiced inquisitor without vexing her.

"So Hester has come home."

"How on earth did she know that?" marveled the doctor.

"And I do hope you'll keep her back. I did think myself she was rather forward, when I last saw her. You know, of course, I speak as a friend."

"I believe," returned Wendell, "that my sister is quite equal to the care of the girl, and to us she seems much improved; and then her good friend, Mrs. Westerley" —

"Oh, Mrs. Westerley?" said his hostess, with rising inflection, interrupting him. "Now do you quite think she is — well, just the kind of person" —

"She is the best woman I know," returned Wendell, annoyed. "You know, I am sure, that she is a friend to whom we owe a great deal of kindness."

"Oh, I thought you were her doctor!"

This was rather confusing to Wendell, and he had to conceal a smile.

"But," he said, "she is never ill.'

"Indeed? I thought I noticed that you went there a good deal."

"Yes, I see her now and then. She is a very good friend of ours, as I said, and my sister and she have so much in common," a statement which would have amazed equally either of the women in question.

"Sisters are pretty convenient, you know," broke in Mrs. Grace, feeling that she had said a brilliant thing and wise. "I do think I ought to tell you, as a friend," she added, "that when she was younger Mrs. Westerley was thought to be a bit of a flirt, you know, doctor; and then she made such a sad match."

"I have never seen anything in her to make me think for a moment she deserves such a character," he replied, endeavoring to answer coolly.

"Well, you can't change my opinions," said Mrs. Grace; "and may be it 's a question of time. You will find out some day. What I know I know, and if my own family had n't suffered I might think I was not called on to speak; but I guess my poor cousin Fox could tell a different story."

"What? Colonel Fox? Impossible!"

"Well, you may think so."

"I am sure you will not want to take away from me the liberty to think no ill of Mrs. Westerley," he said. "But I am late," he added, glancing at his watch as he rose. "I must go."

"And of course," returned Mrs. Grace, "what

I have mentioned was just because I have a friendly interest in my doctor. You know I need hardly ask you not to repeat it. Sarah says people do so misunderstand things."

Wendell moved toward the door little dreaming that Sarah, who had thus come in at the close, should have had a place at the beginning as the text of this little sermon. It had occurred to Mrs. Grace that if things came to the worst a rising doctor might be better for Sarah than no one; and Colonel Fox did not appear to look upon Sarah with even a second-cousinly regard, as she had once feebly hoped he might do.

When Wendell found himself in Mrs. Westerley's drawing-room, he felt as if he had come from under a pall into sunlight. Alice and Hester were chatting merrily, and the elder woman was advising Hester to take French and drawing lessons. "You know, dear, you have quite money enough."

"Mr. Edward has promised to read German with me. I think I shall like that. Do you know, Miss Pearson does not mean to open her school until fall!"

"Well, I hope by that time Mr. Gray will be heard from," said Mrs. Westerley. "He certainly will have something to say as to your future."

"And," asked Wendell, "have you ever thought it possible he might want to take Hester away? I — we would n't like that, Hester."

"I should n't, — not at all! But," springing to her feet, "I promised Miss Ann to be at home

before this time! May I come and dine to-morrow?"

"Any day, every day, my dear."

"Will you walk home with me?" said the girl, turning to Wendell.

"No; I have some patients to see." He had reflected that he would like to linger in Mrs. Westerley's pleasant room, and efface a little the remembrance of his last visit. Then Hester went away.

"You have been to see Mrs. Grace?" queried Alice. "Was she as charming as usual?"

The doctor colored slightly. He had but small control over his face, a grave defect in a physician.

"Oh, I see!" she continued. "I am a favored subject."

"She would not dare to speak ill of you to me," returned Wendell, who hardly knew what to say.

"Dare!" repeated Alice. "She would dare to say anything to anybody of anybody. I sometimes marvel at the courage of such people."

"I think a woman would have to be both very bad to abuse you and very brave to abuse you to your friends," he said, — "you who are so good and just to every one."

"Do you really think that? What an imaginative man!"

"I may not be as good as — as all your friends ought to be, but I don't think I am too stupid to understand Mrs. Grace."

"I don't know," she returned gayly. "'I have

my opinions,' as Mrs. Grace would say. But how goes your work? I mean the new subject you mentioned."

"Oh, very well," he answered. "But I find my hospital getting to be somewhat in the way, and I do suppose I should be better able to attend to what is of permanent value if I gave it up."

"Then why not give it up?"

"Partly," he answered, with some hesitation, "because the money is convenient."

"Oh, but that can't matter with you now," said Alice, who had never felt what it meant to want money; "and I should think you would do far better, even in the way of money, if your time were more your own."

"I hardly know," he replied. "I sometimes wish that I could give myself up to research altogether."

"It does seem hard that you cannot, with your capacities."

"How good you are to me, and how well you appear to be able to enter into a man's life and ambitions! So few people have that power. I can never thank you enough. But good-by. I must go."

"You are going? And why do you go?"

"Do you want me to stay?"

"Of course I want you to stay. I am always glad to see my friends," she added, rather promptly, perhaps a little scared at what she had said. "But don't let me keep you if you are busy."

"I ought to go. Indeed, I must go," looking at the clock. "Thank you once more," and he glanced at her face with eyes which were of a pleasant hazel, and now strangely wistful. "You have the divine gift of healing." Then he suddenly and passionately kissed the hand he had taken. She drew it away. The natural recoil was enough to alarm a man so sensitive. "I have offended you!" he said.

"No — no — not deeply, but go away. Don't stay, — pray don't."

"Oh," he exclaimed, "there are no women like you, — none;" and so left her standing thoughtful by the wood-fire. She turned thence to the window, and keeping back a little glanced after him, with tender softness in her gaze.

"I don't know whether I want to love him or not," she murmured, "but I am afraid I do. Oh, I am afraid I do! And what is it makes me afraid? I wish I knew."

Alice Westerley had begun her early social life in New York by marrying a man who would not have excited an emotion in her three years later. He gave her all that money could buy; and money was as abundant with him as a successful gambler on Wall Street may make it. He died, and Alice learned that another woman and her children had made for a coarse-minded man his real home through the three years of her own married life, and long before. At the end of a year, when the executors turned over to Alice her large share of

his estate, she did at once what she had meant to do from the moment she knew of her husband's domestic treachery. She sent for the woman who had been his mistress, and who had been left uncared for, and said, "I have asked you to come here because I look upon you as Mr. Westerley's wife, in God's eyes, and I have made arrangements to turn over to you his property." This she did, to the woman's amazement and to the disgust of her own friends. Then she took the little fortune her mother had left her, and went abroad. Her father was alive, and, being a singular person, said she was right; that it was a nasty business, and she was well out of it. A year later he died, and the widow was again a rich woman. An accidental visit to Helen Morton resulted in her learning to like the quiet town, where soon after she bought a house. This was the woman who now sat down on a stool, and, looking into the fire, began to try to analyze her own feelings and true desires. Why was she afraid? He was very pleasant to her, with his large eyes, his gentle ways, his wide range of knowledge, and his tender dependence upon her. Was it that after all she did not entirely like this resting upon her opinions? Then she stirred up the failing fire, and took counsel with it. It was a delicate flattery now, but would it be always so grateful? "Perhaps I expect too much," she said to herself; and after a good deal of perplexed thinking, it came to her how delightful it would be to release this man from all trammels, and have

him free to realize his intellectual dreams. She well knew that she had been in a measure unwise to allow him to anticipate her decision; for now it was plain enough that she had at least given him the permission to believe that he might love her with some distinct hope of success. Then she laughed aloud, in a little scornfully defiant way, thinking how her English friends would cry, "A medical man!" when they learned that she had married a country doctor. "A medical man, my dear," she repeated aloud. "But I am not married yet," she murmured, as she rose, — "not yet! I would like to have a little time to myself!" and with this she promptly went to her desk, and wrote to Hester that she had some errands in New York, and should be back within a few days. Of course Wendell would know of this; but she had secured for herself a respite, without which she felt that she was unwilling to face him anew. At one minute all seemed to her to be clear; at another her mind was obscured by a doubt. The process of mental filtration was unsuccessful, and more and more she came to recognize the fact that she was too agitated to consider with useful calmness a matter into which, she began to discover, she had gone too far for honorable retreat.

XVI.

On the day after this interview, Dr. Wendell had two unpleasant surprises. He learned that Mrs. Westerley had gone to New York, and was foolish enough to recall uneasily for an instant what Mrs. Grace had said of her. However, he went into the hospital, and came out early. Ann found him seated by himself, as if in thought. She knew him well.

"What troubles you, Ezra," she asked, "and why are you home so soon?"

"I was tired," he returned; "and, Ann, I am to be dropped out of service next week. They are cutting down the number of contract surgeons."

Ann had been anticipating this, though now it had come it gave her a sharp pang; but she said promptly, with sweet and helpful cheerfulness, "Well, we ought not to be altogether sorry. It will give you more time to see patients, and you know you thought about resigning."

"Yes, but one thinks a good deal before taking so decided a step. It does seem to me, Ann, that we are very unfortunate."

"Do you think we have a right to say that, Ezra?"

"I don't know about the right," he returned, im-

patiently. "I have the blues, Ann. I feel like Saul in his tent. Best let me alone!"

"Ah, but you can't be let alone," said Hester, from the parlor. "Here is Mr. Morton; and have you heard the news? Mrs. Morton is coming home in April."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Wendell, now forced to rouse himself.

"But are you sick?" said Hester, in quick alarm, as she entered with Edward. "Is he sick, Miss Ann?"

"No; he has only had some bad news, and may have to leave his hospital."

To Hester this did not represent any grave calamity, but Edward looked serious. He had now begun to suspect that the Wendells were, for some reason, straitened as to money.

"It had to come, of course," said Wendell. "Soon or late it had to come. Don't let us talk about it any more. It has its good side, like many evils." But after they had gone, he still sat moodily thinking. He had already used, little by little, fifteen hundred dollars of Hester's money, — borrowed it, he said to himself, — and the stock he had bought was still falling, and now he was about to lose his contract surgeoncy! He was with reason afraid at times of the constancy with which ideas haunted him during his moods of despondency. It seemed to him as if there were some mechanism of torture in his mind, which presented troubles over and over in new and horrible rela-

tions; for he was imaginative, as we have seen, and imagination for such men as he is to-day a stern prophetess of evil, and to-morrow a flattering mistress. Do what he would, — and the thought immeasurably distressed this sensitive being, — he kept thinking about Mrs. Westerley's money, and how surely it would rescue him, and how often it had come before him that now he need have no fear as to repayment of what he had borrowed from Hester's means. There was a fiend's cruelty in the conception that a noble, honest creature like Alice was ignorantly making it easy for him to do a shameful thing, and not suffer for it. If she should ever come to know of his guilt, what then? Already a deepening affection was creating for him a clearer sense of his own moral degradation. He got up, went out into the street, and walked rapidly, as was his wont when depressed, and in an hour came back, more quiet in mind.

"Come in, brother," said Ann, as she looked out of the parlor window. "Here is a message to see Mr. Wilmington."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Ezra. Mr. Wilmington had never before claimed his care, and so little a thing as this made him feel unreasonably comfortable. "I will go at once."

"Oh, do take your tea first. There is no hurry about it, they told me."

"And here is a letter from Arty," said Edward. "No, it is not. It must be from Fox. Yes, it is from Fox."

"Open it," said Hester, shortly, "How slow you are!"

"Why, what 's the matter, Hester?" returned Edward, slowly dividing the envelope, and playfully retreating.

"I must know," she said. "What does he say? Who is it from? Why don't you look?"

"Ah," replied Edward, "let me sit down. Wait a moment, — I must read it first," and he checked her with his raised hand, while he read a few lines. "It is n't very — bad, Hester. I was dreadfully afraid," he cried, looking up.

"Tell me at once," she demanded imperatively.

"Hester!" exclaimed Ann. "Hester!"

"Arty is wounded," said Edward; "not badly, — not badly at all; a flesh wound. Colonel Fox writes because Arty can't use his arm. Oh, the dear old fellow has put in a slip for Hester! Why, where is she?"

"She went out of the room," returned Ann; "I heard her go upstairs. Something has got to be done about these tempers of hers. Something has got to be done!"

Ann had never pursued, in her educational duties, the letting-alone system, and, having been shocked and surprised at Hester's abruptness, thought well to knock at her chamber door shortly after herself hearing to the end Colonel Fox's letter. If all this little display of short temper were about the war, Hester must be told to repress it, for every one's sake; and if it were simply impa-

tience, of which Hester had her fair share, it was Ann's business, as her present guardian, to reprove it.

At first there was no answer to Ann's knock.

"Hester!" she called. "Hester, open the door!"

Still there was no reply.

Then Ann shook the door-knob, a little angry, and a very little uneasy.

"Open the door at once. Do you hear me? Hester, dear Hester!"

The door opened suddenly, and Hester appeared on the threshold, drawn up to her full height, an angry light in her eyes.

"What is the meaning of all this?" demanded Ann, severely. "Are you sick? And why did you go away so rudely while Mr. Morton was reading?"

"I — I wanted to," said Hester. "I went" —

"Goodness! 'Went!' I know you went! And you call that an answer; and pray, child, do you think you are behaving yourself properly now? What does it all mean? I must say I never saw you act in this way before."

"I don't know," murmured Hester. "Cannot I just be let alone, Miss Ann? I want to be alone."

"And why on earth do you want to be alone? Is it because you were alarmed about Arthur? That was natural enough; but really, child, I don't see why there should be all this fuss. Colonel Fox says there is no chance of his losing his arm. Upon

my word, Hester, a little real trouble would do you no harm!"

"No harm," repeated Hester, faintly, — "no harm!" and began retreating backward into her bedroom, with her palms raised and her arms extended towards Ann, and a face flushing rapidly.

"Good gracious, what a fool I am!" cried Ann, seizing her in time to guide her fall on to a lounge. "Ezra!" she cried. "Ezra, come here quick! Hester is sick!"

Wendell was at her side in a moment.

"It is only a nervous attack," he said; "don't be worried. Run and get some ice."

While Ann was gone he hastily loosened the girl's dress, and waited, watching her.

Meanwhile, poor Edward, who had climbed the stairs wearily, and in such haste as was unusual to him, reached the door of Hester's room.

"What is it, doctor?" he asked, anxiously, and with a tremor in his voice. "Is she ill?"

"No," answered Wendell, turning; "but give me that pitcher. I can't leave her, or she will fall off the lounge."

Edward came in, and did as he was desired. Then he saw for a moment the white sweep of the girl's neck and shoulders, flushed with moving islets of blood that came and went, the signals of a nervous system shaken by a storm beyond its power to bear. He drew back with a sense of awe at the sight, ashamed, as it were, in trouble for her that she should be thus and so undisturbed.

"Here is Miss Ann," he said, hastily. "For Heaven's sake, don't let Hester know I was here. I will be in my room, if you need me."

Then he limped out, a little dizzy, as happened to him at times if moved by strong emotion, and supporting himself by a hand on the walls he reached his room, and fell into the nearest chair. The patient, tender-hearted man had received a new hurt. Of late he had been mending, and a hope had come to him; but now he was like one who, after shipwreck in a strange land, awaking, sees a color in the sky, and knows not yet if it be dusk or dawn.

The gay-hearted girl who had grown up by his side, who with him was never impatient, who had shared his books and his new pursuits, and had filled his crippled life with a new and wholesome sweetness, was to be his no more even in thought; for now it was all plain to the gaunt young fellow, made over-sensitive by pain, until he had attained a more than womanly appreciation of the feelings and griefs of others.

"What a blind idiot I have been! It is Arty she loves!" he cried, as he sat with his hands on his knees, looking with wide eyes far away, like Browning's lion, into the drear desert of his doubly sterile life.

Then tears came to his help, and he laughed as with a quick hand he cleared them from his eyelids, — laughed to think that he had become physically so feeble as to recognize without a man's

shame the strange easement of tears. But of a sudden the future leaped upon him, and tore him with the claws of brutal realities that were to be; and he saw before him lonely years of pain and slow, enfeebling sickness, and had a prophetic sense of the fading of his appetite for the new things with which of late he had learned to sweeten the meagre cup of life. He also saw Hester, tall and blushing, a bride, and then a matronly woman. It did seem to him that no possible pang had been spared him. For his country in her bloody struggle he had felt as those feel who say little. He had been condemned to possess in patience a soul meant for lordship where death was nearest, and now had come this rival anguish.

It is not wonderful that where their religion does not give men a woman-god in whose lap to cry they manage in some way to create such a resource, or at least some approach to the sweet pitifulness of a god-like maternity. It was his mother the young man thought of now; wishing, in his fresh agony, that he could bury his head in her lap and be her little Ned again, and weep out unquestioned this great sorrow.

At last he rose unsteadily, and tried to walk about, and seeing his own face in the glass was shocked at its expression.

"Oh, this won't do!" he cried impatiently, and set himself to quiet with resolute self-rule the storm within him.

By and by Wendell knocked at his door.

"Come in," he answered. "Is — is she all right?"

"Why, of course," returned Wendell. "It was merely a nervous turn. But what is the matter with you, Edward?"

"Nothing much. I am not very strong, and I suppose Hester's little upset was too much for me. That and the letter, you know. I think I shall lie down."

"Well, I would," assented Wendell. "Hester will be well enough to-morrow. I suppose that she, too, was taken aback by the colonel's letter; but girls are so easily made nervous, and I fancy Ann was rather sharp with her. It is really curious how little patience or sympathy the best of women, if they are strong, have with a woman's nervousness! I do certainly hope the child is not going to be a nervous young woman. I can't imagine a worse fate for any one!"

"I hope not," replied Edward; and the doctor left him.

Mrs. Westerley returned three days later, and found quite enough to employ all her energies. Wendell, who knew from her servants when she was expected to return, was foolish enough to meet her at the station. He was in that state of uneasiness and doubt which the passage of time is sure to bring to a man who feels that enough has been said to give him hope, but not enough to secure what has become more and more a yearning need in life.

Also, there had arisen in his singularly constituted nature another trouble. He began to feel a strange bitterness at the thought that if he married Alice, or perhaps in any case, he would lose out of his life the proportion of affectionate comradeship which Hester had brought into it. Her beauty of form, her alert intelligence, even her little mutinies, were very pleasant to him. Like Edward, but less distinctly, he had comprehended, or at least suspected, the meaning of Hester's reception of the news of Arthur's wound; and as he was right-minded enough about women, and by reason of his refinement of character a man of more than common purity of word and deed where they were concerned, he was troubled at his own state of mind. Was he jealous? he asked himself. Had he been a more profound and experienced student of peculiar human natures, he might have known that his feeling in regard to Hester was merely one of those brief despotisms which an idea sometimes creates in persons of his mental constitution. The mystery of it was, however, far beyond his power to explain, and the fact itself simply shocked him.

His wish to meet Mrs. Westerley at the station was brought about, in part at least, by his almost painful disgust at his own state of mind, and his hasty resolve to end his doubt, and reach a point where indecision would be impossible.

The station was crowded, and the air full of excitement. Men, women, soldiers, and officials thronged the platforms, and the newsboys were

crying, "Great news from the front!" Sherman was driving Johnston before him, and Grant was enveloping Lee's fated army.

Amidst the crowd Wendell found Mrs. Westerley. She colored as he came up to her. She was both pleased and vexed.

"Why did you come?" she asked, speaking low. "My maid is with me."

Wendell was annoyed and embarrassed. He saw his mistake.

"Make some excuse," she added, gently, "and leave me; and don't be displeased," she continued, seeing his troubled face.

"I beg pardon," said Wendell, cut down to a lower level by this calming reception. "I was looking for some one," he stammered. "Sorry to leave you. Good-by."

"Good-by," she said, as Wendell turned and went away, showing but too clearly the discomfiture he so profoundly felt.

"These men! These men!" murmured the widow, smiling. Then she went home and wrote Hester a note, asking her to dine with her next day; and would Dr. Wendell kindly see Mrs. Westerley about some Sanitary Commission business at one o'clock.

At eleven the next morning Alice was called downstairs to see Miss Clemson, who had come on business. They had been having, said Miss Clemson, no end of trouble, the last few days, about Mrs. Grace, and several ladies thought that Mrs. Westerley should become president.

"But," replied the widow, "Mrs. Morton will be at home by the 20th, and indeed I would much rather, on the whole, not come into contact with Mrs. Grace. She has been amusing her leisure with my affairs, I learn, and if I had to cross her I should probably say more than I want to say. I will gladly resign, if you think best."

"But that would be most undesirable. The woman is in a small minority, but she seems to be so made that really the competence of numbers appears not to affect her. I do not doubt that there are times when she believes one and one make nine!"

"I have my opinions!" rejoined Alice, laughing.

"I would go to the office to-day, Mrs. Westerley. She told us on Friday that she had taken home your account book, — I mean the treasurer's accounts, which you have so kindly kept since Miss Graham's illness."

"What!" cried Alice; "she took it home!"

"Yes. I hesitated to tell you about it, but I thought you should be told."

"And what else?" inquired Alice.

"She informed us on Saturday that she and Sarah — imagine it, my dear! she and Sarah — could not make it balance!"

"And is this all?" asked Mrs. Westerley.

"Yes."

"Then wait a moment," said the widow, ringing the bell sharply. "My ponies, John, and make haste. I will be down in a minute, Miss Clemson."

On their way to the office, Mrs. Westerley called at Mrs. Grace's, somewhat to the alarm of her friend, who began to be conscious that Mrs. Westerley's quietness was simply the enforced calm which hides for a time some latent anger.

Mrs. Grace's was never a well-managed house, and it was not until after several vigorous pulls at the bell that the door was opened by an untidy maid, who ushered the ladies into the mournful splendor of Mrs. Grace's parlor.

Alice looked at Miss Clemson, with amusement in her eyes. Evidently there had been a hasty escape effected from the back room, since two empty rocking-chairs were still in active motion.

"What a touch that would be on the stage!" said Alice.

"And what an awful bit of circumstantial evidence!" returned Miss Clemson.

"We have given Sarah an occasion for a little exercise."

By this time the maid, much rearranged as to her dress, returned with a statement that Mrs. Grace was at the Sanitary; and thither, accordingly, they drove, Miss Clemson remarking on the way, —

"You will not let that woman disturb you, Mrs. Westerley?"

"Oh, no! I mean to disturb her. Is n't it dreadful to think that we women have no weapon but our tongues?"

"The men are no better off," returned Miss

Clemson. "What more can they do, nowadays, than we? The duel is dead."

"If I were a man, I could wish it were not. Theoretically I am in favor of it."

"Oh, no, dear," protested Miss Clemson; "it is so illogical."

"And so am I," said Alice. "I hate logical people; and that must be just the time when one wants the duel, when one feels illogical."

"Well, here we are," said Miss Clemson, as they drew up in front of the local office of the famous Commission. The great news of the fight at Five Forks had just come in. Mrs. Westerley found Mrs. Grace discussing the matter with one or two other ladies.

"We have lost twenty thousand men," said she, "and soon we shall have no soldiers to fight with. There won't be one left."

"Nonsense," returned Miss Susan, to whom difference of years was of small moment. "Lee will surrender in a month. Pa says so."

"I think," answered Mrs. Grace, "that we have just begun. No one knows where it will end."

Mrs. Westerley touched her on the shoulder. "Come into the back room," she said, in a clear, sharp voice, while every one looked up, startled.

"What do you want?" inquired Mrs. Grace.

"Just a little talk," rejoined Alice. "You, too, Miss Clemson."

As they entered the empty room Alice closed the door.

Sudden calls on her emotions made this woman cool and effective, if her affections were not concerned. Without raising her voice, but with an accurate distinctness of speech, she said, —

"Mrs. Grace, you took home my accounts last week without authority, and were so good as to say, — you will correct me, Miss Clemson, if I am wrong, — you were so obliging as to say that the accounts do not balance. May I ask, was that assertion meant to give the idea that I had been careless, or what?"

Mrs. Grace, like large masses, was not easily moved, and having been in similar troubles before knew that with most people it was possible to escape at no larger cost than words, which with her were abundant, and of no fixed or unchangeable value.

"Oh, but I never supposed there could be such a fuss. I just thought I had a right; and Sarah, she 's so apt at arithmetic."

"You do not answer me," said Alice. "What did you mean?"

"I did n't mean anything, and I guess I 'd better go."

"This will not do," exclaimed Alice, placing herself between Mrs. Grace and the door. "You have done a mean and dishonorable act. You have slandered me grossly, and now you have not the courage to stand by your actions! If we were men, madam, I should use something more than words; and you would have deserved it, too."

Mrs. Grace was angry, but she was also alarmed. Alice looked as if her sex might not always enable her to resist a desire so earnestly stated.

"I won't stay here to be insulted!" cried Mrs. Grace. "I — I'll call the police!"

"Stuff! We are not men, luckily for you, but still you must hear what I have to say. You must either apologize to me before the women in the outer room, or retire from the Commission."

"And if I won't do it?"

"Do what, madam?"

"Why, just either!"

"Then I must resign, and we shall see which of us the board will choose to lose."

Mrs. Grace knew pretty well what would happen in this case, it having been made clear to her the week before by several outspoken women.

"And what do you want me to say?"

"Anything," replied Alice. "Tell them you are sorry. I don't want you to clear my character for me; but one word more. I had not meant to say to you anything of another matter touching which you have been pleased to gossip of late, but let me add only this: that it must stop, and that if I ever again hear that your tongue has been busy with my affairs I shall be able to find a man somewhere who will talk to your husband."

"Oh, no doubt!" Mrs. Grace rejoined, recovering herself a little.

Alice looked at her with a faint smile of scorn, and saying, "I shall be as good as my word.

Thank you, Miss Clemson," swept out of the room and through the office to her ponies, leaving her foe to say what she pleased, and Miss Clemson to see that justice was done.

Mrs. Grace, inwardly thankful that this high judgment had been pronounced apart, managed, on Miss Clemson's appeal, to make some kind of disjointed apologetic statement, and then went home, as dully angry as her nature allowed her to be. She really had not the power to feel that she had been guilty of a crime, and with her sense of having been put down and lectured unjustly came a sluggish desire for something which in the mind of a quicker being would have been called revenge. Mrs. Grace felt that it would be nice if she could stick pins into the widow, and physically hurt her a good deal.

The next day she had occasion to wail, by letter to Colonel Fox, over her temporary failure to receive certain moneys; as by this time she had lost a little of her dread of Mrs. Westerley, it was not in her nature to omit all mention of her among the bits of news with which she enlivened her letters of business. Mrs. Grace was cautious, however, and only expressed her pity that Alice Westerley was going to marry a poor, unsuccessful doctor like Wendell; certainly, her friends must regret it. Not that she, Mrs. Grace, knew it herself, but she believed there was n't much doubt of it. And did Colonel Fox know that Morton would n't come home, there being an Italian lady in the case, and

that Helen Morton was expected to come alone, poor thing, and she was so unhappy?

This letter did not reach Fox for several days. In command of a brigade of Ord's division, he was following Lee's retreat, and was urging on his men with an energy that left them little repose. Arthur, with his arm in a sling, and now a captain, would listen to no prudent counsels, and Fox had it not in him to keep the young soldier out of the last scenes of the tragedy which was closing in blood and despair on the Appomattox.

Such of us as lived through those days, and had dear ones in that awful joust of arms, may yet recall the never-ending anxiety with which we opened the morning paper, and the thrill with which, in the dead of night, the cry of the newsboy on the street made us sit up and listen. To the little circle of Arthur's friends the closing days of the Confederacy were full of dread. At any moment a telegram from New York might warn them of Mrs. Morton's arrival, and out of this savage death wrestle what news might meet her!

Hester was quiet and preoccupied, and helped Ann at her work with a fervid restlessness. Edward had gone to New York to meet his mother. He had written to his brother as soon as he had felt able to use a pen, and had said, "I think, Arty, that if by any chance you are hurt again, or perhaps in case of any trouble, you or Fox had better write under cover to Wendell, or to Mrs. Westerley. The account of your hurt upset Hester

so much that I feel it would not be wise to have to tell her again any bad news; and then there is mother, too. But, please God, there will not be any more bad news! Hester is all right now."

Alice Westerley had seen Dr. Wendell more than once since her return; but she had been busy in opening the Morton house, and had managed with more or less success to keep her lover from exacting an absolute promise. She felt that she was exercising over him a control which was for her desirable, but which in her secret heart she wished he submitted to with less patience.

On the morning of April 9th came a letter from Arthur to Mrs. Westerley. He wrote: "I do not trouble you often with letters, but Ned tells me that the colonel's letter upset Hester, which is very annoying, because I had it read over to me to be sure it would n't shock any one. I suffered little until the afternoon of the 5th, when we were pushed on by Ord, along with a squadron of cavalry, to burn the bridges at Farmville on the Appomattox. It was, as we know now, a race for the river. General Read gathered a lot of dismounted cavalry about the bridge, and some of ours, my company and another, got on it, but had no time to burn it or to make any covers, because in a few minutes Lee's advance was on us, and I knew what a hopeless and gallant thing poor Read had done. The rebels streamed down on the bridge and just swept us away like flies. Read was killed, and for a moment it was a wild, free fight, for we did not

let them off easy; but they were too many for us, and the few not killed were pushed over into the river. Tell Ned it was n't any worse than a rush at football at St. Paul's. I was down and up twice, and as my right arm was no good I had a bad time. Luckily I was not hit, but I was knocked over into the mud of the river just as they swept by at the end of the row, and saw fellows shooting at me as if I were a mud turtle. I can tell you I wriggled out into the stream pretty quick, and in a moment got under the bridge, on a stump near the water; and you won't believe it, but I laughed when the rebs tore over the bridge they had won. I got caught as I was trying to find my way somewhere; but our people were hard after them, and the poor fellows were so near dead of fatigue that I got off, and on the morning of the 7th fell in with Humphrey's advance. By George, I was glad! I told the general all about how the rebs were used up, but somehow they gave him a sound dressing, I hear, just after I went to the rear. I was all sore bones and Appomattox mud, and well played out; so are the Johnnies, but I shall be all right in a week, and they won't, poor fellows! I am told by the surgeon that I must go home, and as the row is about over I am glad enough. So hurrah for clean sheets and a good dinner! My regards to Hester. I have n't the pluck to write another letter. Fox lost a bit of his left whisker, and of course got in the way of a minie, and has a trifling flesh wound. He ought to hang his uniform up in Twelfth Street

Meeting House, as the Romans did their shields in the temple of Mars."

Hester was on her guard this time, and heard the young man's characteristic letter with equanimity. Then she said to Alice that she would like to read it to the doctor and Miss Ann, and Mrs. Westerley saw that letter no more.

Mrs. Morton drove out to her home on the memorable night of the 9th of April under skies ablaze with rockets, amidst the craze of joy, the clangor of bells, and the shriek of engines, with which a happy city sought to find some adequate expression of its sense of relief.

"What a welcome!" she cried, as with a throbbing heart she ran up the steps of her own house, which was full of cheerful light. Then she saw on the piazza a strong, bronzed young officer, with one arm in a sling. She paused a moment.

"Why, mother, it is Arty!" cried Edward.

"Arty!" she exclaimed, with amazement. "Ah, this is too much!" and she had him in her arms in a moment.

"Take care, mother," he said, "my arm" — And then she held him off, and looked at him with eager satisfaction, while the doorway filled up with Alice Westerley, the doctor, Hester, and Mr. Wilmington; and there were warm greetings, which soothed Mrs. Morton's troubled heart. Then very soon, as it grew late, some of her guests went away; and the young men having slipped off to the library for a smoke and war talk, Mrs. Morton was left alone with Alice.

"I am glad you have come back," said Mrs. Westerley, stirring the hickory fire, which a cool April night made desirable, — "I am glad you have come back; and it is none too soon. After all, where is one as comfortable as at home? For every reason you must be glad to be here. I shall feel greatly relieved."

"Why, my dear, are you still annoyed about Arty?" said Mrs. Morton. "I supposed his long absence and a year's growth might have made them forget. It seemed to me a mere doll love affair."

"Absence has made it worse, I fancy," replied Alice. "I don't know how far it has gone with him, but his being in the war and in constant peril has, I suppose, helped to keep him in Hester's mind. She is seventeen, and of course has the romance of her age; and if you look at Arty, — I suppose you did look at Arty," she added, smiling, — "there is excuse enough in his face for any girl's folly."

"Oh, of course," replied Mrs. Morton. "But I shall settle all that," she went on, remembering with what ease her decisions had been wont to be carried out. "I shall speak to Arty at once."

"I think I would n't," returned Alice. She felt just now a peculiar tenderness for people in his position. "You left him simply Arty, Helen. He is now Captain Arthur Morton, 3d Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, promoted for gallantry at Weldon Cross Roads."

"But he is still my son, and I never knew him to disobey me."

"Then, my dear, you may prepare yourself for an enlargement of your maternal experience! You are thinking only of him. Look at the other argument against you!"

"What other argument?"

"Miss Hester Gray," said Alice.

"Yes, she seems immensely changed. Much improved, I may say. Quite a nice girl."

"Why, Helen Morton, the girl is a beauty!"

"Well, yes, perhaps so. But Arty is too young. In fact they are mere children. Even if for other reasons it were suitable, their age would make me object; and simply, I will not have it, Alice. She has n't a cent in the world; and though that might not matter if it were poor Ned, who is out of the question, Arty is absolutely dependent on Colonel Morton."

"But after all, their age is a little difficulty which with the friendly help of time they will overcome. Also it is quite possible that I may have been over-anxious. Arthur may not care for her. You may be making a nice little trouble for yourself. Wait, my dear, — wait a little."

"But I never did like to wait. Why, then, Alice, did you say he was in love with her?"

"But I never did say so."

"Well, if it 's only the girl, I can afford to bide my time."

"But remember, Helen, I did not say how far

this had gone, or who was to blame, if any one is; I only said that there was danger."

"Now, really, my dear, don't you think that you are a little exasperating?" said Mrs. Morton.

"No; I don't want to be. I shall feel easy now that you are here; that is all. And how is the colonel?"

Even Mrs. Morton's well-trained features showed some trace of disturbance as she replied, —

"I have no doubt, Alice, that you have guessed more than I have cared to write you. John will stay in Europe until he is tired of it. He says that he has nothing to do here, and that it bores him. When men are bored women must continue to bear the consequences. Men are bored and women must weep. As long as he does not want to come home he will stay abroad. Unluckily, there is his wound, which gives him a constant excuse. If it were well and he fit for service, nothing on earth would keep him from going back into the army; but he is not fit, and the claim of his boys, or my wish to return, seems not to have the slightest value."

"You were very brave to make the voyage without him," said Alice.

"Was I? That was a trifle. It had to come. When I told him that I must go home and see my boys, he said that was quite natural, and in fact was as sweet and helpful about all my arrangements as he could be. Really, he wondered I had not thought of it before."

"Where did you leave him, Helen?"

"At Dijon. He came that far with me. Do you know, Alice, he said such an odd thing to me when we parted. I had said, 'You will come home soon, John?' To this he answered, 'I dare say, soon enough. You won't want me when you have those boys;' and then he said he had been very irritable, and at times outrageous, which, dear Alice, we must admit to have been the case. Of course, I answered, 'Oh, no,' and that I did n't mind it, and all that sort of thing we women always have on hand to say; and then what did he add but this: that it was largely my fault, and that if I had exacted my own rights more sharply we would both of us have been happier."

"How brutal, Helen!"

"No, John Morton is never that. It was true, — quite true. I see it now. My life has been a mistake."

"Well, I think I understand it; but just as you were leaving, to say such a thing! And what did you reply?"

"I told him that it was a very nice theory, and true, but that he never would have stood it, and that is also true. I have no idea that he will ever come home. He will discuss it, as he does everything unpleasant, but when the time comes he will find some excuse to remain."

"And you will go back to him, Helen?" returned her friend.

"I don't know. I suppose so. I do not see how I ever can unless I take Ned, and for him to be

with his father is one long misery. But there are worse things in life, I suppose."

"I am very, very sorry. But it is late, and I must go to bed, and I have n't asked you a tithe of the questions I had ready. Promise me that you will do nothing hasty about Arty."

"I will do nothing in haste. Here is your candlestick; but I have brought you a charming one from Holland, so odd, with an angel for a holder and a devil for an extinguisher. I am told that it is very old Dutch silver. John found it in Leyden."

"What a quaintly unpleasant notion!" murmured Alice to herself, as she went up the staircase to bed. "I wonder if John Morton knew that she meant to give it to me. It would be rather like him."

XVII.

The Morton household soon settled down to its new and on the whole more happy life. Edward's change from unrestful discomfort to the peace of soul which a growing love of books and of the pursuits of the naturalist brought him struck his mother with astonishment, and filled her with a hopeful pleasure which what Arthur called "our Ned's melancholy sweetness" could not destroy. In fact, Edward was suffering from the effects of a great moral shock on a system incompetent to bear the blow; and with it, unfortunately, had come to the tender-hearted young man some self-reproach. "Why," he asked himself, "should I, a wretched cripple, have dared even to dream of fastening this strong, wholesome life to my morbid wretchedness?" How wrong it would be even if it were possible! And now it was not possible; but the worst of the bitter of it had been tasted, and use had dulled the palate of despair. For a nature like Edward Morton's there was nothing left except to smooth the way for Arty. The love which had been cherished because it had seemed only a tender friendship was now clearly defined to him, its real nature made but too plain; for moral analysis, like chemical analysis, sometimes destroys what it explains.

The widow, delighted to be relieved in many ways by Mrs. Morton's return, left her very willingly to wind up the affairs of the Sanitary Commission office, and to keep Mrs. Grace and her kind in order. She felt also that it was no longer so clearly her business to watch certain young folks, and as sometimes happened to this woman she lapsed for a season into a fit of absolute idleness, checkered with many visits from Wendell; for in fact Mrs. Westerley was fast making up her mind, and, tired of defense, was becoming indifferent as to what her friends or neighbors might say.

The happy leisure of home life suited Captain Arthur Morton well. He was young, had won his spurs honestly, and found it pleasant to dine out and be made much of.

With Ann Wendell the young captain was a welcome guest, and this also suited him. There was about him a certain grimness of purpose which Ann liked, but that this was accompanied by a never-ending good-humored amusement at and with everything in life seemed to her at times unnatural, and, if she had been able to think it out clearly, contradictory. It was of course not in the nature of things that any woman should long have doubted as to what brought him to the Wendells' so often. But Ann was slow in seeing the by-play of life, and Arthur had a hundred excuses.

On the morning of April 16th, Arthur walked slowly down the main street of Germantown. He was thinking deeply, as were millions of men and

women North and South, of the dark news of Lincoln's assassination. As he went along, people were already closing their window shutters and hanging black draperies on the shops, and on all faces were awe and a terror as of something yet to come.

But now Hester came walking up Church Lane, whither she had been as the messenger of some of Ann's modest charities, and presently saw him; and as she was becoming consciously shy in these days, she would have run away had she been able. All she could do, however, was to delay her steps, and think with amusement of how she would walk down the main street behind him. But suddenly Captain Morton's eyes were on her, and throwing away his cigar he joined her.

"Oh, Miss Hester, what awful news!"

"How can men be so wicked!" she returned. "And now Dr. Wendell says that of all the things that could happen this is the worst for us, — for the South."

"Yes, nothing could be worse for the South."

"And will it make more war, more blood?"

"I think not, but who can say! Let us not talk about it now. I have seen so many men killed — I have seen so many killed while I was talking to them, killed while they were laughing, struck out of life like numerals rubbed off a slate — that I do suppose I don't feel this as I ought to."

"Why, Mr. Morton!"

"Yes, that seems strange to you, does n't it? Still I believe it will be a long while before I

get to thinking life, just mere life, so very valuable."

They walked on a little in silence. Then he added, musingly, "I think I have a soldier's feeling about it all, and I should n't wonder if he had that, also."

"You said a little while ago, Don't let us talk of it; and I would far rather not. But — but," she added, "you won't ever say it was the South?"

Arthur colored. He had declared as much at breakfast. "Whatever I may feel or think, I shall never say what will hurt you. Much I care for the rest of the South!"

Hester felt that the reply was rather more ample than she had asked.

"Thank you," she returned, and there was a moment of silence, when presently they came to the doctor's door. Miss Ann, being now assured of the truth of the news, stood at a window, the shutters of which she was closing as for one dead in the house, and listened gravely to the sound of cannon from one of the camps at the foot of the hill, where men used the voice of war to tell the story of despair.

"Come in," said Ann, opening the door. "Have you heard the last news? Johnston has surrendered; and to think of this death between these two joys! Was it really at a theatre, Arthur?"

"Yes."

"I wish it had n't been there," she rejoined sadly. "And is it true that the man tripped on the flag?"

"Yes; that is true, I believe. But let Miss

Hester in, Miss Ann;" and when she had passed, he said, "I think it has troubled her as a Southern woman. She feels it dreadfully."

"And well she may!" exclaimed Ann, bitterly for her, and went away upstairs, saying to Hester, who had gone into the parlor, "Come up as soon as Mr. Morton goes. I have got some work for you."

"Shall I come now, Miss Ann?"

"No, I am in no hurry."

"Of course you cannot go," said Captain Morton. "Am I not a bronzed veteran, and shall I not be entertained on my return from the wars?"

"Duty first," cried Hester, laughing.

"Oh, Miss Gray, I hope you don't forget the rest of that wise saying; and as Miss Ann has let you off the duty, I may presume there is nothing else but to realize the other end of the proverb."

"I think you are very saucy," she returned; "in fact you are quite too fond of making inferences."

"Is that what keeps you away from our house, Hester?"

"No, it is not that — but" —

"But what? Ned is n't well, and he must miss you awfully. He does nothing but growl about your staying away. Why do you?"

"I think he will get on very well without me. Come in here; I want to show you the doctor's new rhizopod. He is so proud of it."

"Now," said the bronzed veteran calmly, "that was a very feeble bit of diplomacy! Why do you not come to the Laurels as you used to?"

"Don't you think," she replied, "that when one shows a disinclination to answer it were just as well to infer that you are answered?"

He looked up at her, surprised at the ingenuity and truth of the defense, and charmed with the womanly dignity which of a sudden seemed to envelop her.

How old she gets! he thought; but then he saw she was flushing a little. There had come to her a sudden apprehension that what she had said might be misunderstood, so she added quickly, a little angry at being forced to explain herself, —

"Miss Ann thinks that your mother will ask me when she wants me, and as you have many guests I have kept away. Is that very mysterious?"

He had an instinctive sense that this was not quite all; but he said, "That is Miss Ann all over; but I have vexed you." Hester shook her head. A fib by gesture is probably to be regarded as the mildest form of untruth.

"But I did vex you; and one word more. I was not quite correct in what I said about Lincoln and the South. I had said something about the South at breakfast that would have made you furious. I want to say now that I shall never so speak again. I mean — Hester Gray — I mean because of you!"

"I think you should obey your own conscience," she said, proudly standing by the mantel, and facing him. "No friendship ought to control that."

"I have two consciences now," he replied, looking up and smiling kindly.

"Two?" she returned, a little eased at the turn of the talk, — "two? How queer!"

"And one is Hester Gray."

"Nonsense!" she cried, laughing and embarrassed. "I cannot accept the charge. I have quite enough trouble as it is. Besides, you would be so over-supplied with conscientiousness, you could n't turn around without crying; and as for me, I should have to share your conscience, also, and if I am to have two I shall try Miss Ann's. I think it is more of a bronzed veteran than yours."

"But after all, I never meant to ask you to share my conscience. I only wanted to keep the respect of yours."

"As if you ever had it!" she cried, merrily, well pleased to be off dangerous ground again.

"But I shall hope to have it, and to keep it, too."

Then Miss Ann called, as was her way, from the staircase: "Are you soon coming, Hester?" Miss Ann was, as we know, calmly unconventional.

"I must go," said Hester.

"Just a moment, Hester," begged Arthur. Then, as she stood, he took her hand.

"Don't keep me," she exclaimed. "Really, I must go."

"Not yet," and looking her straight in the eyes he went on: "I shall want your respect, Hester, because I want your love — and — and — shall I have it, Hester?" and a great eagerness of purpose came over his strong face. He felt her tremble and

saw her eyelids fall to hide the tender terror of the moment, but yet she did not move. Many times in these few days she had gotten away from this, and now it was come. "Speak, Hester," he implored, hoarsely. There was some gentle instinct in him that made him feel a deep and unselfish pity for the orphan girl. "But if, dear," he added, "it cannot be, don't be afraid to tell me. I shall try hard to bear it."

And then Ann was heard again: "If Arthur Morton stays any longer, Hester, he must help pare the apples for the pies."

Hester looked up, smiling, through fast-filling eyes. Then the captain also smiled. Then they both laughed, while, glad of this diversion, she made a swift and shameful flight for the door; but this flank movement was unsuccessful, and he caught her by the wrist with his hurt hand.

"Don't!" she cried. "I must go."

"But you hurt my arm."

"I don't care — I don't care at all! Mr. Morton, let me go!"

"May I peel those apples with you, Hester?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"And may I always peel apples with you, Hester?"

"Yes," she murmured, faintly.

"Are you never coming?" asked Ann, quite close to the door.

"Yes, yes," returned Hester, very red, and opening it abruptly.

"Oh, Miss Ann, and I am going to help her!" said Arthur.

Then and there it was all only too suddenly made clear to Ann, and leaving them she went upstairs into her room, and sitting down groaned aloud, "What am I to do? How blind I have been! And does she dream that her father was killed by his father?"

It had been a horrible story to Ann as first she heard it, and her last interview with Captain Gray, when he was dying, had so set it in her mind that it would have been utterly impossible for her to disbelieve it. In fact, it was, as she felt, a dying man's statement. The law accepted such statements, and how could she do other than accept them also? All through these years it had influenced her feelings, at least, and had made her look with constant discomfort on the kindness shown to Hester by the Mortons. When she knew that Colonel Morton was responsible for a part of this kindness, it seemed to her as if he were thus seeking to atone to the child he had made fatherless. Her brother had told her that the whole matter was absurd, and that, if true, it was only what must happen in war. He had better not have said "if true." That still left in Ann's mind a dark and unpleasant doubt; and now at last the time had come when, as a woman fearing God, she must face the matter with some practical decision. Ann tried hard to think it all out to a satisfactory conclusion. She felt that this time, at least, she could not quite trust Ezra. How could he decide any-

thing fairly where the Mortons were concerned, and who else was there, and who could tell these glad young people, and why was this misery of duty put upon her? "Had I been less blind, I might have seen it in time," she cried. Then she began to realize how far Hester had grown into her affections, and to think with an increasing pain of Arthur, for whom her heart was strangely open. There was some New England vigor in him, she said, liking to explain her admiration on impersonal grounds. If Dr. Lagrange had been within reach, she would have wished to talk with him about it all. His supreme exactness gave Ann a strong belief in his conscientiousness, and probably she would have been set at rest by his dictum. But Dr. Lagrange was far away in the Mississippi Valley, and was just then lamenting over divers returns of hospital stores conveniently "expended in service," or captured, and was miserably unhappy over wars which were carried on in this unmethodical fashion.

Nevertheless Ann took some comfort after having written to him. She felt that she must do something, and now, having done something, could rest tranquil for a few days; and if then nothing came to her in the way of hopeful counsel, there at least was Alice Westerley.

But just yet she would say nothing to Ezra. If Arthur mentioned his love affair to him, as was likely enough, she might have to speak as to what was on her mind. She did not like the concealment, but events had been too strong for her.

XVIII.

The spring buds filled up, despite the wars and griefs of men, and where the latest snow was melting the trailing arbutus made the Wissahickon hills delicious with its perfect fragrance. It was such a day as always brought Mr. Wilmington to the country for a little sunning. He was yet lingering in his town house, loath to leave his club and the evening whist-table; but the evening whist had been rather broken up of late, owing to great events outside, and as a consequence the little, precise, ruddy face was looking unpleased, its owner's enjoyment of life being temperately made up of a regular succession of many small things. He got out of his train at Fisher's Lane, and sauntered along until he came to the old graveyard at the corner of the main street. Here he paused in the lane, and resting his arms on the crumbling stone wall looked over at the neglected stones, slanted this way and that, and tried to decipher some of the nearer inscriptions. He was wondering what some other old fellow would say, a century hence, when he came to read the words in which his demise would be recorded in Christ Church burial-ground. "At least," reflected the comfortable old sinner, "I sha'n't know." And then he chuckled

at the idea that it would not be well to have Mrs. Westerley write that inscription.

"Good-morning, Mr. Wilmington," said Wendell, approaching him. "What mean these meditations among the tombs?"

"I was thinking," said the old gentleman, "how much more amusing graveyards would be if comments were added to the inscriptions by others than one's heirs."

"Good heavens!" said the doctor, shuddering. "I should decree myself a nameless, dateless grave, like the Quakers." The idea struck him as unpleasant. If he died that day, what might not be said of him? "Are you going up Main Street?"

"I am wandering," answered Wilmington. "I shall probably wind up at Mrs. Westerley's."

Wendell was glad of company. He had learned lately the worst news of his new investment, and he had bought some gold, thinking thus to help himself, and then, to the amazement of all, when Lee surrendered gold fell. That day had come a letter from Henry Gray, dated in London a month back, in which he desired Dr. Wendell to hold ready for his call nine thousand dollars, as he saw a way of making for his cousin Hester a better investment of it than could possibly be made in the North. Like most Confederates abroad, he was utterly unable to see how fast the power of the Southern States was crumbling, and still wrote with a confidence in their integrity which to Wendell seemed little less than ludicrous. "Would the

doctor and his sister be so good as to keep the remaining thousand as a slight proof of Mr. Gray's gratitude, which he hoped to show later in some still more substantial way?"

Wendell did not like this letter, for many and obvious reasons; he walked on, talking, and at times thinking of it anew.

"Disagreeable business, all this!" said Wilmington, vaguely, — "death of Lincoln, and all that. There is a passage in the Spectator which applies to it, — something about rebels; but it might be in Milton."

"I don't recall it," replied Wendell.

"Nor I. My memory is n't at all what it was. Bless me, how sharp the air is!"

"Yes, it is rather biting for the season. And how is the gout, Mr. Wilmington?"

"Well enough, if I don't drink madeira. But you see, doctor, if you don't drink madeira, why, life really is n't worth much in the latter part of the day, you know."

"I would n't take a great deal, or habitually," said Wendell.

"No, I dare say you would n't. But upon my word, is n't that old Grace's barn? He has taken off his weather-cock; and how on earth does he suppose I can dress myself without a weather-cock in sight? It 's no use on one's own house."

The doctor, much amused, condoled with his friend, and suggested mutual weather-cocks, which seemed a satisfactory solution, and Mr. Wilming-

ton went on for some time in silence, apparently comforted.

This gave Wendell a little time for reflection, which resulted in this wise: —

"I have had a letter from Hester's cousin, and perhaps you may be willing to advise me in regard to it, as you did about the first letter."

"I shall have great pleasure," returned Wilmington. He liked to be asked for advice, and in matters of business, or purely worldly affairs, there were few more clear-headed counselors. He put on his glasses, and pausing tranquilly in the street read the letter. Then he read it again.

"Queer hand he writes. What 's that word? Oh, it 's 'investment,' is it?"

"Indeed," said Wendell, "I agree with you fully about the writing. I wonder people are not ashamed to write so badly. It is n't considered an accomplishment to stammer so as to be incomprehensible. But how does the letter strike you, sir?"

The old gentleman raised his eyelids, which were in general very nearly shut, and this unclosure of two large gray eyes had the effect of the sudden lighting up of a disused house.

"I am afraid he has an idea of putting the money in Confederate bonds. But of course that is his business, and not ours. It is his own money."

Wendell was not greatly pleased with the inference to be drawn from the advice, and said, "In a measure it is his own; but if he throws it away, and the rest of his property, too, where will Hester

be? Does n't it strike you that she should be considered a little?"

"You have no right to think that he is n't considering her, and of course my guess is just only a distrustful old fellow's guess. Perhaps he has some really good investment; and after all, when you come to act, you cannot afford to assume any rights."

"And you would advise me" — continued Wendell, with hesitation.

"Oh, you can't need advice! When he draws you will send him his money."

"But it will be rather hard on Hester."

"That may be, or it may not. Perhaps he won't draw at all, and I rather think that he will hesitate now about Confederate paper. It must be a stupid rat that does n't know that ship is sinking."

"I did n't think of it in that light. Things have certainly changed a good deal since he wrote. But don't you think if I found that he had drawn soon after writing me, it would be a kindness to be in no haste to act? A little time might" —

"I said nothing like that, Dr. Wendell," broke in the old gentleman, with unpleasant accuracy of articulation, and opening his eyes again very wide. A dim shade of suspicion had entered his mind.

"I was rather making an inference than repeating anything you said," replied Wendell, quickly. "I need hardly say that he will instantly find his draft honored. As a mere matter of business I

should have no choice, but one can't help speculating as to the desirable."

"Speculation with or about other folks' money is — well, is undesirable; and, by the way, Hester must have a nice little sum over and above her ten thousand, or his ten thousand. Those bonds have gone up like a kite."

Wendell shuddered. "Yes," he assented, "you gave me good advice as to that. Poor Hester!"

"Why poor?" growled the old man. "Is any one poor who has eyes like hers? Only age is poor; and it gets poorer, sir, — it gets poorer, till it ends in the poorhouse of the grave. But I think that young person will be taken care of. I suspect my friend Arty is going to have a say in her future."

"Indeed?" said Wendell, annoyed. "I have had that idea myself; but do you suppose Mrs. Morton would ever dream of allowing Arthur" —

"'Dream,' 'allow!'" exclaimed Wilmington. "You don't know the men of that breed. He will marry the girl if he wants to, doctor, — make your mind easy on that subject," and the old gentleman chuckled gently. "But I must leave you. I am going into this shop. Good-morning."

Wendell said good-by, and walked away. He felt unhappy and displeased with himself, and had an odd sense of an injustice done him in the taking of Hester out of his life; it would be so much sunshine gone. And then over and over he thought, till thought was a wearying pain, of what he could

do. There were now at least three thousand dollars to replace; and even if he sold his sister's stock and his own, at a sacrifice which would be ruinous, how should he tell Ann? — how account for the portion of Hester's bonds he had sold? Death would be easier than to face Ann's pure face, and say, "I have stolen. I am a thief." Amidst the gathering horror of all this anticipated torment, he went feebly through several visits, and then wandered about, until at last he came to Mrs. Westerley's gate. He felt none of the fear of her insight which experience had taught him in regard to Ann's, who had instinctively studied him through the long years of their changing fortunes; but the thought was ever present to him that he loved Alice Westerley purely and for herself, and must marry her to be clear of his pecuniary load. He wanted to marry her, and yet not to have to think he had or might have a bad background of urgent motives. He wished to have all this lovely sweetness of longing free from taint and pure as childhood. Only a sensitive man and a poet in temperament could have kept himself on such a rack. He took off his hat as he stood at her door, struck his forehead with his palm, moved his fingers like one in pain, and at last rang, and presently went in.

He wanted to be alone with Alice, but to his annoyance he found Arthur, and saw at once from their faces that some talk of unusual interest had taken place. Alice rose, and greeted him warmly.

"Ah, you are the very man we wanted. I have

just been saying to Arty that he must tell you and Miss Ann that Hester has promised to marry him. And what a wicked thing, Dr. Wendell," she added, archly, " to promise to marry a man ; and she is so young, too, to be so wicked ! "

Wendell was pleased at her little bit of gay allusiveness, which he felt flattered to know was meant for him alone to understand.

" It is so, Dr. Wendell," said the sun-browned captain ; " and I feel as if now I might be going to be some kind of a relation of yours, and that is n't an unpleasant part of it, either."

Mrs. Westerley liked this well.

" Indeed ? " returned Wendell, not quite so warmly as such occasions demand. " I congratulate you, Arthur. In fact, I suppose I should have expected it. But does your mother know it yet ? "

" No," replied Arthur, " but Ned will settle that. He means to talk to her to-night. I wanted to do it myself, and at once : but he said no, — that he wished to have the pleasure himself. Of course there will be a row, but it won't last. And now I am off. I think — oh, I ought to say I know — that Miss Gray has told Miss Ann. Good-by ! "

" Why did you take it so coolly ? " asked Alice of Dr. Wendell. " I don't think Arthur was enough himself to notice your manner, but I did. You must have had some expectation of it. I should have really supposed you did not like it, if I had not known better."

" It seems like losing a child to lose Hester.

I do not see how life would be possible without her."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Westerley, and picking up a book began to cut its leaves with great precision.

"Why did you say Oh?" queried Wendell.

"That should be an easy riddle," she answered.

"Alice, Alice," he returned, "none of your riddles are easy! You mean, do you not, that I should lose the child's life when a dearer life becomes one with mine; that I was comparing the two loves, which are both so sweet and so unlike?"

"I did not say so."

"But you meant it, and yet you must know what you are to me. Oh, no, you cannot know how you fill my life with a sense of calm content! You cannot know that you alone rise to the level of understanding my ambitions, and believe that under happier circumstances I may come to be worthy, at least in achievement, even of you. A brook flowing into a dry land could not more surely find and fill its depths of craving thirst than you my secret longings! Why do you still keep me waiting?"

"I do not know. Cannot you, to whom I have given so much and said so much, be contented, for a while at least? I know what I am to you. I think I know what I can do to give you freedom from all that now weighs down your life, and I have said — I have said — I loved you."

"But, Alice" —

"Oh," she went on, "you men are all selfish!

Do you wonder I should pause and delay? I wonder women ever do anything else. For you it is no great change; for us — for me it is total. I give up my ways, my plans, my right to be alone or not, to go, to come, and I gain a master," she said, smiling at him. "Oh, you must not think of me as like Hester, like a young girl! I must think, — I must think."

"And I must wait."

"Yes. But you know how it will end. You must know, and when you have me, and I have said that one fatal word, perhaps you will not find me quite all that you choose to dream in your poet heart."

"I have no fear," said Wendell, taking her hand. How cool and soft it was! He kissed it, once, twice. "Oh, I love you, little hand, and I should like well to keep you a close prisoner."

"And do jailers kiss their prisoners?" she said, smiling. "Let them go," she added, for now he had both hands. "Let them go, and I will do something very nice for you."

"What will you do? Will you say yes?"

"No," she replied, with set lips and an air of the tenderest mutiny, "not yet! But I will do what I have never done — I — I — will once — or twice — only once or twice — I will call you — Ezra — I think I like it — Ezra!"

It was a strange shock to Wendell. He disliked his homely name, and was ashamed that he disliked it. At first, for a moment, he really thought she

was using it with a humorous sense of its oddness; but he saw this was not so, and then was pleased that she had conquered this difficulty, which he felt must be, for her as for him, an enormous one.

"Thank you," he said, releasing her hands. "Don't you think it an odd name?"

"I never thought about it at all," she returned. "But now you must go. I expect Miss Clemson here, and Mrs. Morton. It is well that walls tell no tales, sir. Don't come here to-morrow, — don't come for a week, please!"

"And how am I to stand that?" said he. "A week? Not a whole week?"

"Yes, that, — all of that."

"And shall I have my answer then?"

"I do not know. I think not. I do wish you would go!"

"Good-by, then."

"And you will see me in a week? I shall expect you."

"And at what hour?"

"Oh, you must take your chance! Now do go!"

Mrs. Grace's letter to Colonel Fox bore fruit in due season. It found him at midday on the march. He read it, and as he crumpled it into his pocket ejaculated one or two brief words not known to the language of Friends. Then he rode along, musing, sitting tall in the saddle, a fresh-colored man, with a straight, large nose, of a good leathery tint just now, curly-haired and clean-shaven, — a face apt

enough to be stern, but with eyes that seemed ready with gentle apologies for his graver features; altogether the fair figure of a cavalier. Until his father's time all of his race, since Penn sold them lands in Merion, had been Friends of the straitest sect, unto whom Thomas Hicks was an abomination; but of late, although they still held with the meeting and used the Quaker language, they had ceased to affect a rigid plainness of attire. After a rather unruly boyhood, George Fox had taken, when quite young, the small capital his father had left him, and had gone to live on some iron lands he owned in Allegheny County, and there had so prospered that when the war broke out it found him a rich and independent man. To the annoyance of his family he at once entered the army, and there brought to bear the energy, sagacity, and power over men which he had shown in his business, as well as a cool and ready courage, for which in his previous life there been but small chance of use.

Three weeks went by amidst the shock of armies in their final grapple, and at last he had found himself free again for a few days. There had been little time to think calmly, but now he reflected, and before long reached a conclusion altogether characteristic of the man. He obtained a week's leave of absence, and came home. What he there heard casually made his purpose more firm, and with his usual decisiveness he at once wrote to Mrs. Westerley: —

"Dear Mrs. Westerley, I want to see you, and to be sure to find you alone that I may talk with you a few minutes. You need not fear that it will be about myself; but there is something not very pleasant which I feel I must say to you, and which I would be glad — honestly glad — not to have to say."

Then he added that her reply would reach him at the city headquarters.

Mrs. Westerley was made rather uneasy and intensely curious by this note, and hastened to answer that she would be at home to him at one, the next day.

A few minutes before the hour set for his call, Mrs. Westerley went into her drawing-rooms and began to walk about, not at all as the male being does when in thought or annoyed, but hither and thither, from table to table, with what would have seemed to the man-minded immeasurably small purposes, in the way of moving a book, or setting back a chair, or turning a vase around. Then deciding that it was cool for May to be so close at hand, she ordered the fire to be lighted; and as the yellow flames of the hickory shot up, she appeared at last to be satisfied, and sat down for a moment, only to rise again in order to move from her fireside table a book of antique look which Wendell had sent her the day before, that she might look at certain passages which he had marked. What subtle woman's instinct caused her to lay the volume away out of sight on top of the cottage piano

she herself might have been puzzled to state. For indeed the motives which induce these petty actions are often so faintly registered that we may fail to discover them at all, and the doing of a thing may leave us with nothing but a slight surprise at what we have done.

As almost automatically she obeyed her woman's instinct, she suddenly seemed to perceive herself as an uninterested observer might have done, and, smiling, colored faintly as she moved away; when catching sight of herself in the mirror as she paused before it she adjusted a rebel lock, turned her head aside, and with one critical glance sat down by the fire, and resolving to puzzle herself no further took up a paper. She had hardly read a paragraph when the servant opened the door, and saying, "Colonel Fox, ma'am," left them alone.

It is given to few women to be unmoved when for the first time after saying No to a man whom they profoundly respect and admire they see him again. Mrs. Westerley rose and shook hands with Fox kindly and even warmly. It was remote from her nature to hurt without being hurt herself, and she somehow recognized the depth of the wound she had given. She felt it even more now, as she noted his evident embarrassment, which lessened as he talked, but which she, of course, and very naturally, attributed to his memory of their last meeting.

"I am very glad to see you," she said. "Sit down by the fire. How cold it is still! And the

war is over at last. I know you must be deeply glad."

"Yes, I am of all men most thankful to be done with it, and to get back to my mines and my mountain home and my books. I went out to help to do a certain needful duty, and we have done it and done it well, I think. I wish I thought the legislation which must follow it would be as temperate as we who fought would wish to have it, but we shall have no share in the making of it."

"Oh, that is what Mr. Wilmington says," she returned; "and I find all the soldiers I see are most merciful in their talk about what ought to be done. Arty says that the editors and the newspaper people are like the boys who held the schoolbooks when what he calls 'the fellows' had a fight, and were always more ferocious than those who fought. However, I may be keeping you needlessly, but one must have a little war talk. I am dying to know why you wanted to see me. I hope," she added, kindly, "that it is for something a friend can do for you."

"No," he replied sadly, "there is nothing you can do for me, — nothing; and in justice to myself, let me tell you beforehand that what I have come here to say will put an impassable barrier between you and me. I know this so well that I have hesitated — hesitated as I have never before hesitated in all my life — but" —

"Then why," she asked quickly, and feeling a gathering sense of anxiety, "why do you say it?"

"Because it is my duty, clearly my duty, as I see it."

"And — what is it?" she returned, faintly.

"I will tell you in a moment," he replied; "but first let me ask you a question or two. Do you believe that I love you, Mrs. Westerley?"

"I wish I did not. I should be happier if I did not. I am afraid that I know you do," she continued, greatly disturbed.

"I am glad of that, because then you can understand that it must be bitter for me coldly to ruin that remnant of hope which every man who loves such a woman as you must have, do as he will, reason as he may."

"I think I understand," she said, looking in the fire; "at least I can try to put myself in your place. But what is it? What do you mean?"

"Be patient with me just a moment more, as with a man about to die. One question more, and do not be angry with me!"

"No; I can promise that. Go on."

"Are you going to marry Dr. Wendell?"

Alice was certainly amazed.

"And if," she said, proudly, "I decline to answer, — if I do not choose to answer?"

"Then," he said, now having himself well in hand, — "then I should say what I have come to say, merely to explain my visit; and if it be untrue that you mean so to honor him, what I should say would be of no moment, and I should ask you to consider my words as for you alone. But if, my

friend, — I may call you that, may I not? — if you mean to marry Dr. Wendell, then what I have to say will have its force for you, more or less as may be."

She reflected a moment, and then answered him gravely, "I spoke like a foolish girl. Yes, I mean to marry him. I have not positively said I would, but I shall. And now that I have spoken frankly as, on this matter, to no one else, may I ask you in mercy to do the same? You must know now that you keep me in most painful suspense."

"When a man is signing the death-warrant of hope, he may be pardoned delay, but I will be brief. Early in the war, Mrs. Westerley, I was in West Virginia, and heard a good deal of Dr. Wendell. What I heard of him I liked well enough, and there is much to like in him."

"Oh, go on," she exclaimed, impatiently.

"We had a fight on the Kanawha, and in falling back three of our surgeons were left at a country church, with a number of badly wounded men. They soon came under a pretty heavy fire. Dr. Wendell was in charge. I believe he had not been in action before. One of the assistant surgeons was wounded, but Dr. Wendell very soon showed signs of uneasiness, and at last left his post and followed our retreat. He was permitted to leave the army quietly, and in fact the matter was forgotten in the tumult of war; but it came to me both officially and in another way. I felt sorry for him then, and even now I wonder over it; but how,

knowing this, could I let a high-minded woman, whom I love, marry in ignorance a man who is a" — He meant to say a coward, but looking at the woman who was so dear to him he hesitated, while Alice rose to her feet, overcome by a rush of emotions and broken reasonings, too hurried and too wild for analysis or easy expression.

"Stop," she said, — "stop! You have said enough, — you have said too much! I do not believe it, and I am amazed that you, of all men, should have dared to tell me such a tale! I do not believe it! It is but one more of the endless stories of this kind which have been blown about in regard to every one."

"No, it is true."

"True! How dare you tell me it is true! And is there no cowardice in repeating such a story to a woman?"

"Cowardice!" cried Fox, amazed. "And you do not credit me, then?"

"No, it is incredible!"

"And yet," he said, feeling that she was adding horribly to the bitterness of his distasteful task, — "and yet it is true, and officially on record. Happily, it is known to few, I am sure. He is not aware that I know it. Try to feel, as you are noble enough to feel, what I must have gone through in deciding to bring to you this miserable story. If I could have told you of some noble action of the man's, of some deed of courage, on my honor, Alice, I should rather have done it! I should have

been glad to do it. I have given myself pain which if I could have gauged it beforehand would have made me falter even more."

Then they remained silent and in thought. It was impossible not to believe him, — it was impossible to doubt a man like Fox; but after this — what? A man might fail once, and never again; and why must this one defect be allowed to mar a life, and follow a man with unending punishment? But then the shame of such dishonor rose up before her proud conscience, and the scene itself came blindingly into her visual sphere: men wounded, dying; a duty abandoned in terror of mere death! How petty death seemed to her! And if it should ever be widely known, what would men say, and above all Mr. Wilmington, with his old-fashioned sense of honor, and cynical Morton, and the boys? She sat slowly twisting her handkerchief. She felt like a mariner on some wild shore, surf-bruised, helpless, the sport of rock and wave, — now ashore, now in deep water. Then at last she looked up from the fire, and saw a great tenderness of sorrow in the face of the man who looked at her.

"Pity me!" she cried, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Pity!" he repeated. "Ah, if I could but take the pain for you! Had I thought it would hurt you this way, I — I — would never have spoken."

"But why, why did you? I was so happy, and now you must speak to me — you must say more. I — I — can't think. Perhaps it was just once?

He might have been ill, who knows? God alone can judge such things! Do you think I should let it break up and destroy all the rest of a good and useful life?" She spoke, as it were, fragments of thought. "Who needs to be — to be — so brave in our every-day life!"

Fox was appalled. He hesitated. How should he talk to this woman whom he loved, — how say to her that courage is the backbone of character, the life of every virtue; that in Wendell's case the lack of it made the true fulfillment of duty impossible; that the want of it had left wounded men to die who otherwise might have lived? It seemed to him a thing so simply shameful that to emphasize it with comment was absurd. But it was plain that he must answer her.

"I have said what I thought right to say. I must leave it to you now. If it be a small thing to you, I shall mistrust my judgment of a woman I honor. If you choose to condone it, that is your business, not mine; but as you love truth, I pray of you this only: to believe that no base jealousy has driven me to speak. That man is no more to me in life than the fly on your window-pane, and I end as I began, by saying that to be able to come to you and try to save a noble life from — no, I will not hurt you more — I have paid a great price to enable me to help you, if it may be: for now I know that if you decide one way it will still be impossible for me to even dream of presuming on your freedom by a word, or ever to make use of the

freedom I have given you; and if — if you decide another way, and my words remain as useless as words unsaid, even then our friendship must cease to exist, or at least to have any active being, — for surely you will never care to look upon my face again, Alice." She felt that this was true.

She was now sitting, wan and aghast, a little sideways on a low chair, her chin in her palm.

"It is so, but don't go yet. I ought to be angry, and — I was angry. I am not so now. Sit down. I am so dazed I cannot reason, and I am sure when you are gone I shall want to have said something more."

They were silent again a moment. Then a wild pang of thought struck through her brain.

"Does he know of this visit, of your purpose?"

"Not yet, but of course he must know. I intended to tell him first."

"But you did not, you did not?" she said, realizing swiftly the pain it would be to Wendell to know that she had heard it all.

"No, I did not, but I shall. I have a letter in my pocket now, which I shall leave at his house."

"Give it to me!" she cried, sharply, rising and coming towards him.

Fox stood up. He felt powerless to resist her. "There it is," he said.

She tore it passionately, and threw it into the fire. "And you will not speak of this to him? You will not write another letter? Promise me. I insist. I have a right to insist. It is all you

can do for me. You have been, ah, so bitterly cruel to me! Yes, yes, I know; duty, of course. Oh, my God! my God!"

"What!" cried Fox. "Say this of a man to a woman he loves, and — be silent to him? Possibly ruin his chances of a happy life, and hide — Oh, I cannot do that, not even for you. Then truly you might reproach me with cowardice."

"But," she returned, firmly, "if you knew it would not mar his happiness, — I mean what you have said, — then there would have been no harm done."

Fox moved back a step or two, like one recoiling from terror.

"Oh, my God," he exclaimed, "is this possible! And — and really — It is all as nothing to you? I will not tell him, — make yourself easy on that matter;" and so saying he turned and went quickly out of the room, without more words, while Alice, pale and stern, looked after him, speechless.

She had saved Wendell, — of that she was sure; but she had saved him at bitter cost to herself, and she would have given a year of life to forget the look of scorn, wonder, and disbelief which took quick possession of the soldier's face as he turned to go.

"I shall never see him again," she said, "and — he does not understand. How can he understand?"

Then the near memory of the troubled hour melted into a certain tenderness of thought about

the man she loved. She loved him, — that she knew full well; and she had saved him from what would have been for both one long misery. Beyond this she could not yet go. To reason on it all was impossible, and she was shocked when, days afterwards, she saw Wendell to find that she was more undecided than before. Sometimes remembrance pleads better than any presence, and the statue which love carves has graces the model never knew. But despite her doubts she knew that she should marry Wendell, for in natures like hers the maturity of a love once born is as certain as the growth of morning.

Colonel Fox went away sick at heart, and for a time disgusted. Never before had he so laid bare his soul, never fought so stern a fight for self-subdual. He had failed, he felt, — failed alike in his purpose and in command over himself; for in a crisis of passionate anguish like this the individualities of men, repressed by decorous usage, break loose as they did in the early days of the Renaissance, and the true natures of men and women clash like sword blades in the fury of unchecked realities.

He went home and wrote briefly to Mrs. Westerley, "Pray God to forgive me, dear friend. I knew not what I did;" and then he returned to camp, and hid his trouble in the active work of breaking up his regiment, and in trying to take some thought of those of his men who needed help or lacked immediate employment.

XIX.

Edward had insisted upon taking what was properly Arthur's task, — the telling of the latter's engagement to Mrs. Morton. He was well aware that she would listen to her elder son when she would listen to no one else, but he had also other reasons for desiring to come between his mother and brother. His own estate was ample, and he knew that she would present arguments about money which his means gave him the ability to put aside ; moreover, he had taken this duty on himself with some vague sense of its being, as it were, a penance for the wild desires which still at times shook his firmest resolves.

He found his mother busy in the library.

"I want a few moments of your time, mother," he said.

She turned to listen, with the gentle readiness of attention she had always for him. "What is it, my boy?"

"I have asked Arty to let me tell you of his engagement to Hester. It is a great pleasure to me, for you know I am very, very fond of her."

"Engaged to Arthur! Nonsense, Edward, they are mere children ; and if they were not, it is a thing I should totally disapprove, — totally! I shall tell Arthur so. I can understand very well

why he was unwilling to speak to me about it. There was a time when I was consulted about the affairs of my own household."

"But, my dear mother," said Edward, a little amused, despite his sore heart, "these are not children, and you must have seen what was going on. As for Arthur, he has made a name for himself, and so far as I can see has the right every man has to marry whom he will. War ages people fast, mother."

"Marry!" she returned, — "marry, indeed! On what is he to marry? They have neither of them a cent."

"But I don't suppose he wants to marry her to-morrow. Fox wishes him to take a share in his iron works, so as to be himself more at liberty; and I mean, if you don't altogether disapprove, — and you won't, will you, mother? — to give Arty the capital he will require."

"Of course," said Mrs. Morton, petulantly, "it is all to be managed without the slightest reference to me. An unknown girl, half educated, coming from nobody knows where, and brought up by these common Yankee Wendells!"

Clearly Mrs. Morton was angry and unjust.

"They may be plain, but common or vulgar they are not; and really, you know, as to what you say about Hester, my dear mother, that is — well, not quite true. The Grays are good old Carolina people. Now please don't talk so. It is n't like you. It is n't at *all* like you."

"Still, among them, Ned, they have trapped Arthur; and as to the girl" —

"Stop, mother!" he entreated; "don't say any more. No one has trapped him. You hurt me."

"Hurt you! What do you mean?"

"I had not meant to tell even you, dear mother, but now I must. I loved her myself, mother, — I most dearly loved her! But I am an old, battered, useless man, and no fair young life like that is to be mine."

"You loved her," she said softly, "and he has taken her from you. Oh, my boy!"

"No, you are again unjust. Neither she nor he knows this, or ever will know it. No one but you knows it."

"My poor Ned! Ah, if only I could help you."

"But you can help me. No one can help me better than by bringing Hester as near to me as it is God's good will that she should be."

"There is nothing you can say, my son, that has not full weight with me; but about this matter I should have been consulted sooner. I must think about it. Oh, if it had been you, Ned, *you* would have told me."

"I don't know that, mother; and you must remember that it is my fault he did not tell you."

"And you loved this girl, my son, and you gave her away."

"No, she went away," said Ned, smiling.

"Who is that on the porch, Ned?"

"It is Miss Ann."

"I don't want to see her. I do not want to see any one. I shall never get over this, Edward, — never."

"She may have come about this very thing. It would be quite like her straightforward ways. I am sure she will feel, mother, that she is in the place of a mother to Hester, and, knowing how much her brother owes to you, will think as I do, — that we can do nothing without you."

"It would be a very correct and proper feeling for her to have, but I am surprised that any one either thinks or feels correctly nowadays."

"But you will see her?"

"Yes, as you wish it. The servants know that I am at home."

"And shall I go?"

"No. Why should you?"

Miss Ann entered, looking rosy and plump, with her usual expression of undisturbed calm. Duties were not always pleasant to Ann, but they were to be done, and done effectively, like any household tasks. In ordinary social intercourse Mrs. Morton was a trifle dreaded by Ann Wendell, who felt that her own ways were not as the ways of these people; but in matters of graver nature no human being would have awed or stayed the spinster for a moment.

There was a hearty welcome from Edward Morton, and a kind but not over-hearty greeting from his mother, who, as Ned said afterwards, had on a black silk dress and her sternest expression, and

who, with the light of battle in her eyes, looked at the rosy, plump little woman as if she were an emissary from the camp of the foe.

Ann Wendell talked very little at any time, and was unskilled in the civilized art of saying non-committal nothings. The winds and the storms interested her, and she spoke of them, but with an uncommon earnestness; and this was because she had been born on Cape Cod, and they had been the rough playmates of her calm and ordered childhood. But her talk about weather was almost the only minor chat she knew how to use. She was disturbed as she came in by the presence of Edward Morton, and thinking he might leave before long was relieved when Mrs. Morton, who felt the need of a little neutral conversation, began with the usual commonplace introductories.

"Did you walk over, Miss Wendell? What a famous walker you are! In these delicious May days it is a pleasure to breathe. But you ought to wear a veil; the wind burns one so badly."

"Yes, I walked. It is n't very far. I have never been brought up to wear veils;" and then she added with consecutive exactness of reply, "You mentioned the weather; I don't feel quite sure about it. It looks like a northeaster brewing, and you know that makes one anxious. It 's so bad for the fishermen."

Mrs. Morton did not know, but she felt faintly amused, which was well just at this time.

"Indeed, I hardly ever notice the weather

much. I am luckily one of those happy people who have no interest in the weather-cock."

"I wish I had not," said her son. "I think old Nick invented the east wind."

"The winds are all of God's sending, Edward," returned Ann, gently shaking her head, and with some mild censure in her tones, while Mrs. Morton looked up abruptly, with displeased surprise that this woman should address her eldest son in this familiar fashion. She had heard her do so before, but just now was doubly ready to make disagreeable comments.

"And so are many unpleasant things, Miss Ann," said Edward, smiling. "But you see, if the winds were predestined, I was predestined to abuse them, and so it's all a part of the foreordained arrangements of the universe." He liked to puzzle Ann Wendell.

"Yes, I dare say," returned Ann, seriously, getting her mind in order for a skirmish on free will, and the like.

"My dear Ned," said Mrs. Morton, smiling, "you are a great preacher lost. Won't you take off your cloak, Miss Wendell?"

"No, thank you," she replied. "I have but a few minutes. I came over to talk to you about a thing which has been on my mind; a matter" —

"And shall I leave you with mother?"

"Is it about Miss Hester Gray?" asked Mrs. Morton, who was getting impatient.

"Yes, it is about her; but I was thinking that perhaps your son" —

"If it is about Hester I should prefer that Mr. Morton stayed. We were discussing that very disagreeable affair when you came in, and as Edward represents his father, just now, it is my wish that he remain. Will you have the kindness to go on, Miss Wendell?"

Ann did not like it, but the formal directness of this speech in no way troubled her; and she felt that after all it was a family matter, and that Mrs. Morton had a right to choose who should be present.

"It must be as you like. You know — I suppose you know — that Arthur has asked Hester to marry him, and that she has said she would."

"Yes, I have heard as much," returned Mrs. Morton, stiffly.

"I am sorry, very sorry, about it. I did not think it would have come about so soon, or I should have felt it my duty to speak of it before. I am to blame, because I know, and I think you must know, that it is a thing which can never be."

"Never be!" broke in Edward. "Why, what reason on earth, Miss Ann, can you have to say that?"

"Be so good as to keep quiet, Edward!" exclaimed his mother. "I am glad to hear a little common sense from some one. Pray go on, Miss Wendell. I quite agree with you."

A little puzzled, Ann hesitated for a moment, but only for a moment. "I was afraid," she continued, "that I was wrong. It is very difficult to be

always right, but I could not see how any one who knew what we know could just look on and say nothing."

"Knew what we know?" repeated Mrs. Morton. "I don't quite clearly understand you."

"Nor I," added Edward.

"And yet you do know that when Captain Gray was dying he said over and over that it was your husband who killed him; and can a dying man lie? The law says he cannot."

"And have you really kept that nonsense in your head all this time?" exclaimed Mrs. Morton.

"I have had it on my mind," replied Ann. "But it is not nonsense. The law says" —

"But the law deals thus only with the sane!" exclaimed Mrs. Morton, bewildered an instant by the firm hold which this incident had obtained on Ann's faith.

"What does this all mean, mother?" said Edward. "I have listened simply with astonishment, but our good friend Miss Ann is not a rash or hasty talker. Please explain it to me. What does it mean?"

"It is easily explained, Edward. Hester's father died delirious at the hospital, and unhappily occupied the bed next to your father. Something your father said put it in Captain Gray's mind that the shot which finally cost him his life was fired by your father. This idea incessantly haunted his brain, and at last was so annoying that we were obliged to move your father before it was

quite prudent. I have heard that poor Gray raved about this delusion until he died."

"But" — said Ann.

"One moment, excuse me," continued Mrs. Morton. "This is the simple statement of what happened. Mr. Morton said it was impossible and absurd; Dr. Lagrange and Dr. Wendell said the same; and now comes Miss Wendell to ask us to consider this story from a tragic point of view!"

It certainly did seem to Edward as nearly ludicrous as so grave a matter could be.

"Does n't it seem strange, Miss Ann, that you, of all these various people, should be the only one to continue to think seriously of this matter? Cannot you see in what an exceptional position it places you? Can you be right, and all these others who know more of it than you altogether wrong? Surely you cannot have reflected upon the matter."

"But he said it, — he said it," urged Ann, firmly. For years she had brooded over this, and now it had become for her a fact not to be questioned. To pass it over in silence appeared an inconceivable mode of dealing with what was for her an awful reality.

"Said it! Of course he said it," answered Mrs. Morton; "I heard him say it. But what then? Dying men say many silly things, and Dr. Lagrange told me that this was perfectly nonsensical. In fact, how could the man know who hurt him, in such a scene as that?"

"But Colonel Morton told him it was so," replied Ann.

"Told him! Nonsense. That, at least, is distinctly untrue."

"Your husband will not say so, I am sure," insisted Ann.

"And I am as sure he will," said Edward. "I never heard the story before, but of all the absurd things I ever did hear this seems to me the most so."

"Indeed, I agree with you," said Mrs. Morton.

"And how could you, Miss Ann, of all people," urged Edward, "entertain for a moment such an idea? Cannot you see what an impossible thing it is, and what mischief it may make?"

"We must do our duty, and leave the issues to God. It is true, — I am sure it is true. I think I am sure," she added, recalling what Dr. Lagrange was reported to have said. "Even if you do not credit it, Hester must be enabled to use her own judgment upon it. I shall tell her."

"No, by heavens, no!" cried Edward, angrily.

"But I must."

"You cannot dream of such a course," exclaimed Mrs. Morton. "Remember that my husband, Arthur, all of us, are concerned! It seems to me, Miss Wendell, a strange return for what we have tried to do for your brother."

"Mother, mother!" said Edward.

Ann began to see that there were several sides to

this question, clear as it had seemed to her, plain as she had thought that it must be to every one.

"I am not ungrateful. We owe you much," and her eyes filled. "I have not wanted to be unjust, and least of all to you and yours."

"Oh, my mother did not mean that," declared Edward.

"No," assented Mrs. Morton, "I did not; but when such absolute nonsense is talked, how can we stop to choose our words!"

Ann was hurt and troubled. "And what can I do?" she asked, much moved. "I see before me a duty. To you it is absurd. And yet it remains. I ask you, as a Christian woman, what can I do?"

"Do? Do nothing," returned Mrs. Morton.

"Wait, at least, till I hear from my father," urged Edward, sensibly, little knowing the train of events his purpose was to start.

"You will believe him, I presume?" said Mrs. Morton.

"If he can say that it was not so, and can show us that it was not, I shall believe."

Edward was somewhat amused at her doubts, but also much relieved. "That will answer perfectly. And you and I will talk it all over. I am sure I can satisfy you, — quite sure. And you will not speak of this to Hester until we have heard from my father."

"No, I will not; not now, at least."

"Then it is settled?"

"Yes, for the present;" and she rose and went

away, not quite as well satisfied with herself as she had been.

"Yet I was right," she thought; "if it were only an accident of war, I should still be right!"

"Well, my son," said Mrs. Morton, rather illogically, "you see what comes of association with such people as these, and how it ends?"

Edward smiled. "Hardly. But, mother, did you ever dream or hear of such inconceivable nonsense? Poor Miss Ann has lived so out of the world that she is really to be excused; but the mischief of it all, mother, — the mischief! Why, the mere whisper of such a thing would craze a girl like Hester; and then — poor Arty!"

"I said it could n't possibly come to any good, and now you see."

"But it must come to good, mother, and it will. And now you are going to try to see it as I do, and think what it will be for me to have a sister like Hester."

"I shall do, as I have always done, the best for my children; but I am sure your father won't like it."

"Wait till he hears what I say," he returned. "I shall write at once. I cannot get this thing out of my head. It seems to me so full of danger."

"It is certainly very disagreeable. You may say to Arthur, Ned, that I will think it over. I cannot see my way to any conclusion as yet; and meanwhile I would rather not talk to him about it."

"But won't he feel hurt?"

"That he should have thought about before," she said, and went up-stairs, resolving that she would talk it all over with Alice Westerley, who had heard this strange tale, and who, as her friend remembered, had simply smiled at it as a matter of odd interest.

Edward wrote at once to his father, inclosing a note from Arthur, and with less patience than was usual with him awaited a reply.

XX.

Mrs. Grace by degrees recovered from the shock of her tilt with Mrs. Westerley. Hers was a moral constitution not prone to suffer long from wounds, and she soon began again to take a complacent interest in the affairs of her neighbors. She had not quite liked a letter she had received from Colonel Fox, and had also had some difficulty in explaining to Mr. Grace what she had done to justify her cousin's refusal to act longer as her trustee. At present she was a good deal taken up with her daughter, who was malarious from much furtive ingestion of bon-bons; but the mother still found leisure to do a little dull talk when occasion offered. It had seemed to her that it was wise to ignore Alice Westerley's rebuffs, and she therefore lost no occasion to speak to her, — a course alike unpleasing and amazing to her sensitive victim.

There had been a meeting at Miss Clemson's house, and the rooms had been filled with women interested in the care of the orphans made by the war. As usual Mrs. Morton kept things straight, and so checked diffusive talk that the work was soon over and assigned to committees. Then most of the women went away, and the few who were left fell to chatting.

Miss Clemson looked taller than ever in her small rooms, and also more gaunt, having adopted a new and wholesome but implacable kind of dress, which seemed to have disposed, once for all, of the kindly curves of the human frame.

"Where did you get the pattern of that table cover?" asked Mrs. Grace.

"Is n't it quaint?" said Miss Clemson. "Miss Wendell made it; or rather, to be precise, Miss Gray made it after a design which Miss Wendell gave her; but I added the fringe myself."

"It is very nice," assented Mrs. Grace. "I suppose we shall soon have news of Hester Gray and Arthur Morton. But how his mother will hate it! Not a cent, my dear. And in her old age, too!"

"Really," returned Miss Clemson, "the interest which marriage appears to possess for some people, Mrs. Grace, is curious to me."

"But why curious?" asked Mrs. Bullock. "I can understand your own indifference to it, my dear. It 's a bad habit you acquired young:" which was true, since in her blonde youth Miss Clemson had been fatal; but then and always had vaguely resented the admiration of men.

"Why?" she returned. "If you would read Quetelet or Buckle, you would see that marriage is purely a matter of statistics. Given so many men and women, there will be just so many marriages. The unit in such matters is of mere fractional value."

"I don't think I quite approve of your views," exclaimed Mrs. Grace.

"I dare say," said Miss Clemson, indifferently; and then Mrs. Bullock laughed.

At that moment Alice Westerley, who overheard them, and who was in high good humor, joined the group.

"Don't any of you trust Jane Clemson on the subject of marriage," she said. "After filling her wigwam with countless scalps, she sits down and says that nobody else ought to go on the war-path."

"I don't think," rejoined Miss Clemson, who took all discussion gravely, — "I don't think that marriage should be the single goal of a woman's existence. Let us educate women as well as men are educated, and then they will have so many higher aims in life that they will not condescend to dress and talk and dance merely to please men."

"I should think that just a little ignorance might be conducive to bliss in these days," said Alice. "I should like to start a rival college, with professorships of the art of pleasing. What not to know should be one branch of study. Your wise girl graduates would be nowhere."

"Men will never truly respect us," returned Miss Clemson, "until we compete with them in their universities and in their professions."

"I shall advise Arty to apply for admission at Vassar."

"I don't think he could pass."

"Perhaps not. It would depend somewhat on the age of the examiners. But I must speak to Helen Morton before I go," and she turned away, laughing.

"It is impossible for Alice to discuss anything seriously," said Miss Clemson. "It is really a sad defect in so fine a nature."

"I quite agree with you," murmured Mrs. Grace, to whom the remark was not addressed.

Miss Clemson rather resented her assenting opinion, but said nothing further.

Then Mrs. Bullock spoke with decisiveness about the warmth of the weather.

"Yes. It seems nearly impossible to regulate the temperature of one's rooms. I looked at my thermometers before you came, but they don't quite agree. One does expect thermometers to agree, even if people do not. Please to open that window behind you, Mrs. Bullock."

"Dr. Withers," remarked Mrs. Grace, "says that I keep my house too cool; but Sarah — she is never hot enough."

"Dr. Withers!" exclaimed Mrs. Bullock. "I thought Dr. Wendell attended you."

"Not now. I could not get him to come into my views. He says Sarah has no liver."

"Rather odd, that, I must say," commented Miss Clemson.

"Yes, was n't it? — when I know she is just all liver and malaria, and that 's what 's the matter with her. But then he never was of much account about livers, and they do say his practice is going to pieces. Mrs. Starr has left him, and Mrs. Evans is going to give him up."

"I am afraid," said Mrs. Bullock, who had also

her views as concerned doctors, — "I am afraid he does n't consider constitutions enough. There is everything in knowing people's constitutions."

"I hope you are both wrong," responded Miss Clemson, who liked Wendell. "I never change my doctor."

"Oh, don't you?" said Mrs. Grace.

"Because I never have one!" cried Miss Clemson, laughing.

During this Mrs. Westerley, who was pretending to sympathize with a sad tale of departing cooks, and like grievances, was keenly listening to the chat beside her. She knew that Wendell was not keeping his patients, and a sense of indignant annoyance arose in her mind that this wretched woman should dare to sit in judgment on a man like Wendell. She felt more and more that she, at least, must stand by him. Then a new phase of the talk caught her ear.

"I don't think," continued Miss Clemson, who never allowed abuse of the absent, "that people here appreciate Dr. Wendell's abilities. He ought to be in a great city. I think myself that it is very difficult to judge of a physician. We have n't the opportunities or even the knowledge."

"I dare say," replied Mrs. Bullock, who was facile in abandoning her opinions. "And I must say this for Dr. Wendell: he went last week to see my farmer's wife, and she and three of her children had small-pox; and I can tell you if I were a doctor I certainly would not attend cases of small-pox! I did hear that Dr. Withers would n't go."

"Oh, I suppose it is n't his specialty," explained Mrs. Grace; "and after all, it is their business."

"Still, I think it is a brave thing," said Miss Clemson, "to face diseases as they do. I call a man brave who just coolly goes as an every-day affair, and takes these risks. It is the only pursuit in quiet times in which the peril is incessant and the call for quiet courage constant."

"Well, I am glad my doctor does n't go to such cases," said Mrs. Grace. "But I must speak to Mrs. Morton."

Alice listened eagerly. It soothed her immeasurably to feel that here was some one who could call Wendell brave. She would have liked to kiss the tall spinster, who had thus ignorantly poured balm on her wounds, but contented herself with saying, as she turned to leave, —

"My dear, how well you look! And what is your secret for keeping a complexion like a baby's? It must be the way you 're dressed; but then you women who never think about such things have always the nicest dresses;" for which little fib let us hope the fair widow may be forgiven, and her flattery set down to an honest desire to pay her debts with usury thereto.

Altogether the morning had been a good one for her lover, and with a new tenderness and a pride that set her wondering if Fox himself would have stood this other test of courage, she went out into the May sunshine feeling in pleasant accord with the weather.

Then Mrs. Morton overtook her, and said that she would walk to her house, as she had something to say to her; and so, leaving the other women, they turned into Mrs. Westerley's gate. In the drawing-room they found Hester and Mr. Wilmington, who was apt to make some excuse to see Mrs. Westerley as often as he could. He had not misused his leisure, and in fact preferred, as he said, one woman at a time.

"So, Miss Hester," he had remarked, "Master Arthur has been saying pretty things to you, I hear?"

"Indeed, you must be misinformed," replied the young lady, beginning to grow quite unreasonably warm.

"Oh, but he has told me all about it" said Wilmington.

"Then you had best not believe a word he says," she returned, smiling. "I never do."

"Watch him well, my dear; watch him well. The godfather who could renounce for any of that Morton breed the devil and the — What 's the rest of it?"

"How should I know?" answered Hester. "I never was a godfather."

"Nor I. But there is something they renounce. I would n't do it for Edward, and I would n't for Arthur. Oh, you are a rash young woman!"

"But I am not to be a godfather; and with your counsel," she returned archly, "and your experience of those things he ought to have had re-

nounced for him, don't you think we may get along?"

"Oh, it's 'we' now! Be very good, and tell me what you want for a wedding present."

"A house, and a carriage and four," she cried, laughing.

"Gracious, I shall be a ruined man! But here come Mrs. Westerley and Mrs. Morton."

"Oh!" exclaimed Hester, who had not seen the latter lady for some time, and who dreaded the encounter. Mrs. Westerley kissed her, and Mrs. Morton asked how she was, and was coldly civil, as such a woman well knows how to be; while poor Hester, who fully understood that she was by no means to be welcomed into the Morton family, felt as if no corner could be undesirably small as a refuge.

Wilmington was aware that there was an unpleasant check in Hester's love affair, and he also liked to annoy Mrs. Morton at times; so partly from disapproval of her present course, and partly from habit, he lapsed into the repetitions which were apt to overtake him when with more than one person, or when it pleased him not to help the talk.

"I don't think Edward is very well," said Mrs. Morton, speaking past Hester.

"No, he is n't well," muttered Wilmington. "Looks sick."

"And I have lost two cows in a week."

"Two cows in a week!"

"Don't you think that is atrociously bad luck, Mr. Wilmington?"

"Yes, that 's bad luck."

Then Mrs. Morton felt forced to fall back on Hester, as Mrs. Westerley, standing apart, had just said, "Pardon me, Helen, I must open these notes." She began to talk to Hester about her studies, and was presently struck with the girl's gentle self-possession.

"And was Edward a good teacher?" she inquired, watching her critically.

"Surely," thought Hester, quite conscious of being under inspection, "a mother-in-law that is to be is terrible;" and then, remembering whose mother she was, her pride melted. "But what woman would want to let a girl like me marry such a son as Arty?" And thinking thus, she replied, "Oh, Mrs. Morton, Mr. Edward was the best of teachers; and who is there like him? I think him the best of men."

Wilmington opened his eyes at her, murmured, "Indeed!" and relapsed into what might have seemed slumber to those who did not know his ways.

"Yes, and life has been hard for him, poor fellow!"

"But perhaps that is why he makes it gentler for every one else. I think in the old Round Table days there might have been people like him, but not now."

Hester had lost her terror in the pleasant task of praising her hero, Edward.

"You are a wise little woman." It was enough to talk about Edward to satisfy Mrs. Morton, and the girl had been artlessly clever in her speech.

Then Mr. Wilmington woke up. "He is n't worth much compared to Arthur," he said; "rather a sentimental young man."

Mrs. Morton laughed. "Oh," she said, gayly, "that hook was not too well baited! Come and dine with us to-morrow."

"On one condition," he returned, looking, as Mrs. Westerley afterwards declared, as wicked as the scapegoat; "and that is that I may have Miss Hester."

Mrs. Morton was equal to the occasion. "Certainly," she assented, in her most quiet tone, "we shall expect you, Miss Gray."

"But Hester dines with me," rejoined Mrs. Westerley, promptly.

"Then you will both come," continued Mrs. Morton, with frosty politeness. "At seven, dear."

"You are very good, Mrs. Morton," Hester replied, "but I think I promised to dine here with Mr. Edward and Mr. Arthur Morton."

"What, all the family! You will have to endure me quite alone, Mr. Wilmington;" and then Mrs. Morton felt that somehow the battle was not for her to-day, but she had, nevertheless, a distinct sense of approval of the calmness of her young adversary under fire.

In a little while Mr. Wilmington went away with Hester, and made himself pleasant, as he knew full well how to do, and the two elder women were left alone.

"I wonder, Alice, that you allow that woman

Mrs. Grace to speak to you. Edward calls her the 'news fiend.' Is n't that delightfully descriptive?"

"My dear, I never cut people now. It is an endless annoyance. You have to be so on your guard not to speak to them. I don't know how it may be with you, but time does betray one so. I want to scalp some woman to-day, and in a year I only care just to pinch her a little, and in another year I am indifferent about her altogether. I think I like that big angel Ned's views. He told me that he quarreled outright with a man once in Texas, and that it was like having measles; it prevented him from ever quarreling with anybody else."

"Oh, there is no one like that boy. But he can be angry, I assure you."

"Of course he can. A man is worth little who cannot."

"I have always lived with men who were capable enough in that line. And do you, know, dear, that is one of the things I never did like about Dr. Wendell. He seems to be quite unable to get into a good honest rage at anything."

"Perhaps he controls himself."

"No, the man is too gentle. He has, I think, a — well, a sleek disposition."

"Oh, what an unpleasant phrase, Helen!" cried her friend, coloring slightly. "I think you are unfair, and this matter of Arty's has made you irritable, too."

"Take care," said Mrs. Morton, playfully shaking her finger at her friend, — "take care! It

is n't only Mrs. Grace who talks about you. I have always wanted you to marry, — and it is very good of me, too, dear, — but not Dr. Wendell, Alice. At least marry a gentleman."

"I think he is one," retorted Alice, angry, and governing herself with difficulty.

"A kind of one; not just precisely our kind."

"And pray, Helen, what are our kind like?"

"You know, Alice, quite as well as I do."

"I don't think I do, or if I do I am tired of our kind. When I mean to marry Dr. Wendell or any one, I will let you know."

Then Mrs. Morton understood that she had said enough, and made up her mind that her friend would marry Wendell.

"Well, I am glad that you are not committed in any way."

"Of that you may rest assured," said Alice. This was hardly true, but she believed that she had a fair right to so construe her present relations. More and more had she felt to-day that she was keeping him and herself in a false position. She was sore, too, from the whips of these idle tongues. Now she would end it all, and do the thing and abide by it, and so put herself where no one could dare to talk thus to her of the man she loved.

"But, Helen," she added, "what was it you wanted to say to me? Of course it was n't about this. I think we may drop Dr. Wendell."

"No, it was quite another matter;" and then she told Alice the story of Miss Ann's visit. "And

now what do you think of it? What with these Wendells, and this absurd love affair of Arthur's, and this serio-comic performance of that Yankee old maid, I am what my old nurse used to describe as 'about done out.'"

Alice winced a little, but, keeping her repeated hurts to herself, she answered, "I don't wonder. But is it so bad, after all? Let us look at it calmly. I warned you about Hester, and you did nothing."

"I know," said Mrs. Morton, gravely.

"And of course you will have to yield."

"I suppose so," groaned Mrs. Morton, who was what Mrs. Bullock called "low in her mind."

"And except as to money, what can you say? The girl is pretty, well-mannered, intelligent, sweet-tempered. What more on earth can you want?"

Mrs. Morton was too shrewd to talk to Alice as she had done to Edward. "Every one is against me," she said so plaintively that Alice laughed aloud.

"And every one ought to be against you."

"Edward wants to give him money to join Colonel Fox in his iron works," said Mrs. Morton sorrowfully.

"Not really? How hard on you, Helen!"

"You are really too outrageous," rejoined the injured lady; "but it is always so! I never have my own way."

Alice smiled. "If Hester had come to you, and said, 'Mr. Morton wants to marry me, and I think I ought not to let him without your consent,' you

would have kissed her, and said, 'Now that 's the kind of a girl for a daughter!' Would n't you, Helen?"

Mrs. Morton smiled despite herself. "I dare say I should."

"You always do come right in the end. But I overheard you say to Mr. Wilmington that Ned was not so well. Is it this tragedy of Miss Ann's?"

"Partly that, I think; and I am afraid I have worried him about Arty."

"The more reason for doing so no longer."

"Perhaps you are right, Alice. I will talk to Arty."

"Do, dear. And about the other matter. Miss Wendell, you say, has promised to be silent, and Edward has written, and asked an answer by cable?"

"Yes."

"Then," continued Alice, "you can do no more. Tell Arty you must wait to hear from his father, but of course not a word about the other trouble. In twelve days — let me see, that will be about May 14th. We shall hear then, and it will be all cleared up, even to Ann's satisfaction, and you will welcome this dear child to your heart. I wish she were my daughter."

"I will think of it, dear. How good and patient you are, Alice! I don't wonder every one loves you." And so the two women cried a little, and kissed one another, and Mrs. Morton went away

feeling somehow that her burden was lighter, while Alice went up-stairs happy in her victory, and singing like a bird for pure joy.

By and by she sat down at a table near to the window, and, after a moment's thought, wrote thus to Wendell: —

"I wondered why you had not been here to-day, but now I know it is because you have cases of small-pox. Come and see me when you feel it to be safe. Tell Hester to be patient and to wait. I have had a satisfactory talk with Mrs. Morton. As soon as they hear from Colonel Morton everything will come right. I have delayed answering you in form, partly from an indecision which has been as painful to me as to you, as you must know by this time. But now I mean to end it, and if I ask you after this to wait a few days you will not mind it, I am sure. I have had a fancy — and you ought to be glad to think that I am yet young enough to have caprices — that I would not say, frankly, Yes, until we have heard from Colonel Morton about this other matter. Now I am very truly Alice Westerley; but after that I shall be very truly *yours*. A. W."

That she was even yet quite free from indecision cannot be said; but this was all that was left of it, and she felt happier than she had done for many days.

Decision is a pleasant inn after a troubled journey that has led us hither and thither. To the wholesome-minded guest it is apt to open wide the

kindliest hospitalities of hope, where we are served by cheerful fancies and feed on what we will.

Having thus ended this matter, Alice looked out over the shrubbery and across the hills and fields; and everywhere the little riddles of last autumn's thousand seeming deaths were being answered in the swarming life of spring. Birds went busily from bough to bough, with wooings in which there was little indecision. The air was dotted with insect life forever on the wing, and over all a bustling western wind drove a great flock of clouds across the sky.

A warm, inquisitive sunshine stirred all creation with throbs of reawakened life, and in the woman's heart also was springtime, and mysterious longings, and growth of sweet feminine hopes, and welcomes for the tender happiness which promised her a larger and yet a truer life in the days to come. Such sense of exaltation to higher levels of existence and its better purposes comes instinctively to those who nobly love.

As she sat and thought, Wendell's face came before her, with its prevalent undertone of sadness and its air of scholarly refinement. "Not a gentleman!" she murmured, smiling. "Ah, we shall see!"

XXI.

Wendell received Alice Westerley's letter with delight which a year before would have been without alloy. He loved her very deeply, and in the presence of a passion so profound, the first and the only one of his life, his self-appreciation faded into the most utter humility, and he wondered that he had ever dared to hope; while at times there arose in his mind an overwhelming feeling of triumph when he thought of what those who had criticised him so freely would say when this became known. To be justified before men socially and in all other ways by the preference of such a woman was sufficient return for anything the world of lesser beings might have said or done.

It was hard to have any drawback, hard indeed; and he cursed his folly as he thought of being no longer an upright man, clear of shame, worthy of a pure woman's love. It cannot be said that this sense of degradation was altogether the growth of honest hatred of his weakness and sin, nor yet even the healthy reaction from single acts of wrong and a return to the normal despotism of moral habits which were good and cleanly. It was rather the fact that he had become accustomed to test himself and his ways, and even his little social habits, by

the exquisite refinement of purity in Alice, which seemed to envelop him with a charmed atmosphere as his love for her deepened in intensity. It was more by his ideal of her conscience than his own standards that he tried himself, and it was therefore not enough that he still felt secure against exposure; for there was for him an ever present idea that, come what might, he brought her to a life which, in her eyes, would seem hopelessly defiled. There were hours in these days of waiting when he felt inclined to go away and to write to her that he was a man unworthy of her love and trust. But then the impossibility of inflicting on himself this anguish rose with her smiling face before him, and by an easy effort he put away the impulse. That Ann had begun to guess the secret of his love he well knew, and feeling that he ought now to tell her he would surely have done so had there not been constantly with him this association of his love with the sense of shame. He felt, however, that he must clear himself of the risk of exposure, and then he could speak with less alloy of discomfort in regard to whatever of terrible the near future threatened. He would wait.

His distress was increased, however, by the fact that four days after Alice left, a new and unpleasant actor came suddenly upon the stage. Wendell had heard nothing more from Henry Gray, but as he was daily expecting to do so he had been worrying himself sick in his effort to replace the money he had taken. At one time he would have gone to

Edward for aid, but already much money had been almost forced upon him by that generous friend; and the doctor's dislike to ask anew was made greater by Edward's present condition, which was one of growing weakness, with rare intervals of entire freedom from pain. Here was certainly a still possible resource, but it must be a last one. In his trouble he would have turned even to Mrs. Morton, but he was well aware that he was out of favor at present; and he had not forgotten that Mrs. Morton had once or twice, out of her affluence of ready advice, given him some quite friendly counsel as to his need to be rather more economical. Where else to go he knew not, and all the refinement of the man's emotional nature protested against any recourse to the purse and kindness of the woman he loved. That for him was impossible. Meanwhile, poor Ann worried herself over his haggard face and questioned him in vain. Her conclusion was that his present inclination towards Alice Westerley had not been pleasantly returned, and with her regrets there was mingled in Ann's mind some trace of another feeling, which she made haste to put down with all the decision of her loving nature. Her feeling that he was troubled, and also her remembrance of the ridicule he had cast upon her grave theory of the relation of Colonel Morton to the rebel Gray, combined now to indispose her to discuss with her brother Hester's engagement, or the awful difficulty which she conceived of as forbidding it. Once or twice when the new alliance

had been referred to before him, he had either left the room, or in some way shown a displeasure which Ann could not comprehend, and which at times inclined her to suspect that possibly he, too, disapproved of it.

Wendell was on his way home from the city, after a vain effort to sell his stock and to raise money in impossible ways, when he saw a gentleman standing on the stone steps of his house. The stranger was a man about fifty-five, and was dressed in a closely buttoned black morning coat, neat check pantaloons, and a well-brushed hat that was Piccadilly all over, and wore a rose in his button-hole. The figure was such as one sees in Bond Street by hundreds of a morning, except that the feet were small, the boots delicate and thin as a girl's, and that their owner carried a large, shining cane with a huge gold head. Wendell, who noticed faces as doctors learn to do, observed only that the clean-shaven, sallow features were rather strong and gaunt, and that the stranger wore his straight dark hair so long as to excite attention. The incongruities of dress of course escaped Wendell's observation. The moment the stranger addressed him the doctor knew who he was.

"Pardon me," said the gentleman, seeing Wendell take out his pass-key, "are you not Dr. Wendell?"

"Yes, I am Dr. Wendell."

"My name is Henry Gray. I should apologize because I have not written, but now I am here in

person, which saves explanations. Permit me sir, before I enter your house, to thank you for your long and great kindness to my young relative."

He spoke with a little old-fashioned sense of saying a fine thing, and there were unexpected inflections in his speech. Also his final *r*'s were softened into broad *a*'s, but the voice was pleasant and the tones were refined.

"You will think us well rewarded when you see Hester. Come in. You are very welcome."

Henry Gray followed his host into the large, low-ceiled room, and sat down while Wendell went in search of Ann and Hester.

Ann was, as she said, awfully flurried, and to Hester's amusement insisted on her changing her gown. But Ann was a wise woman in her way; she knew the value of first impressions, and was not without a just pride in the maiden to whom she had given a home. As she hastily arranged the girl's dress, the thought went through Ann's mind that if she proved to be right about the grave matter recently in dispute, here assuredly was an ally who would see things as they should be seen. She was therefore glad to welcome the new arrival.

Houses and rooms, Mr. Gray took small note of. He had lived in camps and ranches, and slept on the plains, or housed himself in the *tepe* of the Indian; but to him, as to most of those who have dwelt much in wild border lands, there had come a habit of scanning faces closely; for in such semi-barbarous existences the features lose the diplomatic

masks of guarded social life, and to look sharply at a stranger is a needed safeguard for those who mean to illustrate the survival of the fittest. The Cape Cod spinster, in her simple serge dress, with no gay colors save those in her clear eyes and ruddy cheeks, seemed to him a curious personage. He began to wonder what kind of a lady she must have made of his young kinswoman. Certainly the Carolina gentleman, with his personal belief in the Grays, his patriotism limited by state boundaries, and his after years of turbulent border life, was a not less new and amazing type to Ann Wendell, who was now looking with a double interest at one who might be Hester's future guardian.

Ann came in, with her usual quick movement.

"I am glad to see you, — very glad," she said with unusual warmth; "and Hester will be down in a minute."

Mr. Gray took Ann's proffered hand, and bending over it spoke with a sort of stately courtesy, the secret of which is almost lost to the present generation.

"I have mentioned — but with too much brevity — to your brother how greatly I feel your considerate kindness to my cousin. Allow me to thank you also. We have been fortunate, Miss Wendell, — fortunate."

"It has pleased God in his goodness to give us a pleasant duty," replied Ann, "and I trust that our stewardship may be found in his eyes to have been wise."

"By all means — yes — quite so. Your observations appear to me to be grounded on justice," said Gray; "I have no doubt that I shall find my fair relative all that I might desire."

"I trust so," returned Ann. "Hester is a good girl, and as a rule acceptable to her elders, and, as far as I have been able to teach her, a good housewife. But here she is, to speak for herself!"

"Upon my soul," exclaimed her cousin, going forward with both hands extended, "a Champney from head to feet!"

Then he kissed her quite formally on the forehead, as she said, —

"You have given us a great surprise, sir. But when did you arrive? I think you are very, very kind to come to see me."

"Bless me, my dear," he returned, "I think if I had known what I was to see, I should have come before! It is astonishing how you favor the Champneys. You don't remember Elinor Champney, I suppose?"

"No," replied Hester, embarrassed by his undisguised admiration, "I cannot say I do. Was she very plain, sir?" she added, slyly.

"Plain! A woman, my dear, men fought about. There was poor Tom Manley — but, dear me, that was ages ago! How old are you, Hester?"

"Almost eighteen."

"Well, well, what awful mile-stones you children are!"

Then Wendell rose. "We will leave you to

your cousin, Hester," he remarked; "you must have a world of things to say," and so went out with Ann.

"And you and I, Hester," said Mr. Gray, "are all that are left of the good old stock."

"And have I really no relation but you?" returned Hester, with an odd sense of being socially shipwrecked.

"Not one, my dear child, not one! The last, I reckon, was Jack Champney. You know he was your fourth cousin, once removed, — no, I should say twice removed, — and he was killed by those damned Yankees. Excuse me, but the two words come together so naturally! Shot at Shiloh. He commanded a division, and I have heard it said that if he had not been killed we should have exterminated Grant's army."

"Poor fellow!" murmured Hester, endeavoring to get up a little affectionate grief for the cousin once, twice, but now permanently, removed.

"There was Archie Gray," continued her cousin, reflectively. "I forgot him; but most generally people did forget Archie. He moved up into North Carolina, and set all his slaves free, and just went down in the world. Was n't much above a cracker at last."

Hester somehow felt a larger interest in this degraded scion of her race.

"Cracker?" she queried.

"Cracker, my dear, is a sort of no-account white man; mostly North Carolina folk."

"Was he any nearer to me, Mr. Gray?" she asked.

"Cousin Henry," he replied, "or cousin Harry, if you please, child. Stick to the good old Carolina way of standing by your own people. But, your pardon, you asked" —

"Yes, I asked if he were any nearer relation; and is he dead, too? It seems so strange to me, cousin, to be just all alone in the world. I knew I must be, but to be told so brings it home to me."

"There is one man your devoted servant," returned Gray, with a courtier-like tone in his voice, as he surveyed with appreciative eye the cleanly cut nose and proudly carried head above the sloped shoulders.

Hester felt like making one of Mrs. Morton's room-occupying courtesies, but she only said, with a mental note for Arty's amusement, —

"I never can forget your kindness. How could I, indeed?" And then, as it seemed right to partake of his interest in their family, she added, "This Alexander Gray, you were saying" —

"Archie, my dear, — Archibald; a family name. Your great-grandfather was Archibald, and this was his second son Archibald's third son; all the rest dead, you know."

"And he is dead, too?" said Hester, still curious.

"Yes, he is dead;" and then he continued with some reluctance, "A poor devil. Married a Yankee school-mistress. When the war broke out he

entered the Union army. I did hear he raised a nigger regiment, and was in that business at Fort Pillow."

"And was he killed?" asked Hester.

"Well, he has n't been heard of since. I understood that he was killed. A — a — I beg pardon, a good riddance. Had too much of that Compton blood. You know those Edisto Comptons? No-account folks. Don't you ever marry a Yankee, cousin Hester."

Hester colored. "You forget, cousin," she said, "that I might have starved if it had not been for my Yankee friends. In fact, I fear you will think me only a lukewarm Southerner. I have tried to be as quiet as I could about the war. I do not yet understand why it came, or why, as they say, it had to come; but it has cost me my father, and given me the love and help of my friends here, and yours too, and — and — everything, you know," she added, disconnectedly, remembering with a full heart that her misfortunes had not been without pleasant palliatives.

"Yes, yes, I understand," he returned; "excellent people, I should say. I shall not forget them. But I suppose the name went for something."

"My dear cousin!" exclaimed Hester, much amused, "nobody here knows anything about us, except Mrs. Morton."

"Oh!" said he, "I don't consider that can be quite correct. We were here very often in old times. However, time makes sad changes. And

Mr. Morton, — is he at home? A very elegant gentleman, my dear; for a Northern man, quite remarkably so."

"He is still in Europe," replied Hester.

"And his family? I must do myself the honor of a call."

"They too have been good friends of mine," said Hester.

"Then the more reason for me to thank them," returned Mr. Gray. "I go to Baltimore to-morrow, but next week I shall return here, and then I must go South. A sad visit, Hester. But it is folly to lament, and you must try, my dear, to look forward with hope. When next this country has a foreign war, we shall try it over, and I hope with better fortune. Just now the foot of the North is on us, and they have another Poland to govern."

This was all rather perplexing to Hester, who had divided allegiances, and with whom Arthur's opinions had considerable force.

"It is sad enough. I trust we shall have no more wars. Arthur — Mr. Arthur Morton says that this way of manufacturing history is disagreeable."

"Arthur?" he said, suspiciously. "Who is Arthur? Oh, Arthur Morton, is it? I think I saw him in England. Quite an unpleasant young person. Not so well bred as his father. Left the table because I said Mr. Adams was a — a — Yankee; you can supply the adjective. I perceive you will keep me in order!"

This was rather too much for Hester. "I meant to write to you, but it was not quite settled; and I think I ought to say that I have promised to marry Mr. Arthur Morton, — Captain Morton he is now."

Mr. Gray stood up, with a look of amazement on his face. "And you a woman of our crushed and bleeding Carolina! You have so far forgotten your home, and your blood, and your dead father? You, the last of the Grays! Hester, Hester! And a Yankee officer, too! I thought we were low enough before!"

The girl rose also, and stood grasping a chair-back. The quick blood of a masterful race was in her face, and the blue iris, dilating, darkened around the central depth it bounded. "I owe you much," she said hastily, — "more than I ever can repay; but you would respect me little if I were to let you, or any one, say such things as this to me. No obligation can make it right for me to hear such words about the man I love. I think if you had reflected a moment you would not have said them, — never!"

Gray cared little for the wrath of men. He was always, as he said calmly, "personally responsible, sir." But the anger of a woman was, as it is to all chivalrous men, difficult to deal with; and then Hester was so splendidly handsome in her wrath. It cooled his own rage a little; but he was an obstinate man, used to having his way.

"Oh, child," he said, assuming the quiet tone of an elder person, "you have not yet seen your

ruined home; you have not yet seen where Sherman's bandits cut down your old oaks, and made targets of your ancestors' pictures! Oh, Hester, our desolated South — wait, wait till you see it!"

Somehow this business of her ancestors' portraits, as to which Gray felt a fierce resentment, struck Hester as a small part of so large a calamity as the war.

"I may have lost a home," she replied, "but I have also found one; and war — war is all wicked, and there is no good in it. There may be cause for you, a man, a Southern man, to feel bitterly; but you cannot expect that, situated as I have been, befriended as I have been, I should share your feelings."

"Then you should be ashamed to confess it!" he cried, with momentary anger, yet still wondering as he saw how her features responded to the thoughts she uttered, while her strong, erect form carried unstirred the changing passion of her face. It was like a fair young tree, whose leaves tremble, shaken by the wrath of stormy winds, while the trunk scarce sways, held firmly by its anchoring roots.

"Ashamed!" she repeated, with a smile; "and you talk to me about the pictures of my dead ancestors! I dare say I shall be proud enough of my people when I come to know more about them; but there is something nearer to me now, and you have dared to ask me to be ashamed of that!" Her heart swelled beneath the wild unrest of her bosom

as she thought of Edward and of the life and love Arthur had laid at the feet of an orphan girl, a stranger in a strange and hostile land. Cry she would not.

"I have no personal objection to Mr. Morton," said Gray, a little embarrassed.

"Nor have I," returned Hester, scornfully.

"But how you," he said, "a woman of the South, can bend" —

"Stop!" she exclaimed. "I repeat what I said. You have no right to use your relationship and my obligations to enable you to insult me. And I will not bear it. I will not bear it from you, or from any one!"

"Good gracious!" said Gray, sitting down suddenly. "There is no doubt of what your breed is! I think Mr. Morton will have his hands full."

"Very likely; but at least he knows how to respect brave men who could risk their lives for their beliefs."

This was a little unpleasant to Gray, who had been abroad on Confederate business during the war, and who had a slight sense of having fallen below his own standard, because he had not followed his flag into battle. He looked keenly at Hester, and became convinced at once that she had meant no personal slight, which was true.

"Won't you sit down?" he asked.

"No. I prefer to stand," she replied.

"But you will oblige me by sitting down." She seated herself.

"Cousin Hester," he said, "I have hurt you. But you must not forget how natural it is for me to feel as I do."

"Of course," answered Hester, who was easily softened, "I know that; but there are things dearer than home or country, and if I have spoken too strongly, you should remember that I am here a waif, an orphan, a dependent, and that — that — oh, it is not just like any every-day matter; it is not just like any girl's love affair. I" — She could not go on. There rose up within her consciousness a sense of what her lover was to her; how considerate he had been, how tender; how in this warmth of love he had known how to evolve and ripen all that was best in her. The thought of it brought the color to her cheeks, and the anger went out of her eyes, over which the lids drooped in tender concealment. It was a moment when more than ever before the strength of her love became clear to her. As white light turned by the prism's plane breaks into unimagined color, the simpleness of maidenhood flashed into the passion and hopes and multiple emotionalities of one whom Love has baptized a woman.

She could not trust herself in speech. Henry Gray observed her keenly. He was beginning to see the power and tenacity of Hester's nature.

"And do you really love this young fellow so much?"

Hester opened her wide eyes in pure reproach for answer.

"Yes," she said, after a moment. Just then a laughing face appeared in the doorway.

"Oh, Arthur — Mr. Morton!" exclaimed Hester, hastily setting her moral house in order. "My cousin, Mr. Henry Gray; Mr. Arthur Morton, cousin."

The two men shook hands, and began to talk about indifferent matters, carefully avoiding the topics which were still very bitter in men's mouths. Arthur had come to see Hester, and after a few moments of this strained conversation felt that Mr. Gray ought to go; but such was not the latter's intention, and he sat calmly chatting, resolved to have yet further speech alone with Hester. Then he tried the little social stratagem of silence; but this failed, with so joyous and ready a tongue as Arthur's, till at last Mr. Gray rose, and saying to Hester, "I will see you next week; we have still much to talk about," bowed over her hand, said a cool good-morning to Arthur, and left the room.

Then Hester said, "I have told him, Arty."

"Oh, have you? What a plucky little woman! Wait a moment, I ought to say something to him myself;" and leaving her in spite of her protest, as she somewhat dreaded what might come of the interview, he overtook Mr. Gray.

"Let me show you the way to the station."

"Oh, thank you," returned Gray.

"Miss Gray has told you," said Arthur, "of our engagement. I owe you an appearance of need for apology, as you are her sole relative; but my

mother, who does not disapprove, is unwilling that we should be publicly engaged until my father is heard from. Of course he cannot be anything but pleased, and I had meant to write to you as soon as we received his answer."

Gray failed for a moment to reply.

"I hope I make myself clear," added Arthur.

"Perfectly," said Gray. "I perceive, sir, you have correct ideas. I perceive it, sir, with satisfaction."

"And I may presume," continued Arty, who, save for Hester's position and feelings, was blandly indifferent as to what Mr. Gray thought, — "I may presume," and he put on his finest manner, "that I have your approval?"

"To consider the matter with our Southern frankness," returned Gray, "I do not like it. I do not desire Hester to marry at all as yet; and you will pardon me if I say that it could not naturally be agreeable to me that she should marry a Northern man, or an officer of your army."

Arthur's inward reply was other than his speech; what he said was, "I dare say not;" and then he added, with a keen sense of the fun of it, "My father may have like objections. It did not occur to me before."

Gray saw well enough that he was being mildly chaffed. He did not relish it, and was unwise enough to reply.

"If your father's son, Mr. Morton, is as set in his ways as my cousin's daughter, the form of asking might very well be dispensed with."

"There are some things," Arthur answered, "which we do as mere ceremonies; but on my honor, if I had supposed I should be talked to after this fashion, neither your years nor Hester herself would have made me go even so far as the ceremony of asking."

Halting suddenly, Gray turned on him. "Mr. Morton, you are a young man, and I am well on in life. We can't quarrel like men, and when that decent course is impossible there is no use in scolding one another. A word more. You have won, and we have lost. Make some allowance for sore bones, sir! There is my hand,— you shall hear no more of this matter from me; and by George, sir, I am glad you are a soldier. I said something foolish about that, I believe, but I did n't mean it."

Arthur shook his hand warmly.

"I dare say I have need to apologize, myself," he declared. "Thank you. But here is your train. Hester will be pleased, I am sure."

Mr. Gray took off his hat, while Arthur touched his in soldier fashion, and then, seized by the contagion of Gray's ceremoniousness, made a salute as bountiful as that of the Southern gentleman, and went his way back to Hester, to condole with her over the pictures of her ancestors.

The interview was probably satisfactory, as Arthur was able to tell her that his mother had been very nice to him, and hoped it would all be well when the colonel was heard from, and also that Ned had sent his love. It was now Thursday, and

by the next Thursday they would be sure to hear, because his father was to telegraph.

Meanwhile Ann Wendell was greatly dissatisfied with herself. The effect left upon her mind by the dying delirium of Hester's father had been profound, and Hester's engagement was to her as if a ghost had risen from the grave to chide her failure to perform a manifest duty, which she knew she had put aside, awaiting the hour when Hester should be old enough to hear so terrible a tale. It is impossible to estimate the force with which such grim events impress themselves on people of simple lives and limited range of experience. They are recalled as men recall their first sensation of the terrors of an earthquake. It was true that Dr. Lagrange and Ezra had smiled at it all; but they were both friends of the Mortons, and Ann knew but too well Ezra's tendency to put aside unpleasant ideas, and that of course he would dislike to offend Mrs. Westerley. All this seemed clear; but to whom should she go in her deep and serious distress of mind? She had rashly promised not to speak to Hester, — not, at least, until she had heard what Colonel Morton would say; and if he too were again to pronounce what seemed to her so grave as but the dream of a dying man, what then? She had said it would satisfy her; but would it, or should it? Was not Hester the only competent judge? Had not she a right to hear this story? In vain the troubled and straightforward woman tried to see it as Edward saw it. Even if Hester's

father had been, through pure accident, shot by a certain man, could Hester rightfully marry that man's son? In her worry Ann became singularly perplexed as to what was wrong and what right, grieving vainly over her promise of secrecy, until suddenly it came to her that this promise was limited to Hester. There was Mr. Gray, of whom already she had thought as an adviser, — of all persons the one on whose shoulders she could put her care, and rest content that it was where it should be. He should promise not to speak of it to Hester until they heard from Mr. Morton. The more she thought this over the clearer it seemed; for now, in Lagrange's silence, — and she had twice written to him, — it appeared to be her only resource, and something she felt sure she must do.

Hester had told her that Mr. Gray would call the next Friday afternoon, on his way to Newport, where he had landed property, which had been transferred to a Northern friend for security during the war. Meantime, he was to be moving about, and letters were uncertain; so that, much annoyed at the delay, Ann finally resolved to await the chance of a personal interview, and, having settled this, sought to put the whole matter aside for the time.

XXII.

THURSDAY was the earliest date at which Edward, who was now constantly in bed, could look for a reply by cable, and he was becoming anxious, despite his own convictions. On Thursday afternoon he sent for Dr. Wendell. The doctor found him looking badly, and sat by his bedside a long while; liking to talk with him, and having it over and over again on his lips to mention that he himself was in debt, and needed large help. It seemed hard to do just then, and he decided that he would wait. Mr. Gray had spoken no word, and given him no chance to say anything of their business matters, and so he had yet a little time.

"Does my disease," asked Edward, "make you fear any sudden result? I mean, am I within the risk of dying suddenly? I have long meant to ask you."

"No. I do not think you are. The condition you are now in is common in these troubles, and will pass away. You may even be better than before."

"I am glad of that, for mother's sake. How strange it is that as life gets less and less worth having we should cling to it the more! I suppose this fierce clutch at what little is left of existence is

really a feature of some diseases more than of others."

"Yes, it is so, I think," said Wendell.

"Well, for what has given to my life of late such sweetness as it has, I have to thank you, doctor. You see even now I can read." His bed was littered with books and scientific journals. "Do you remember giving me this little Marcus Aurelius? See how I have marked it! I sometimes wonder if in another world I shall be able to thank that grand heathen. Between pains, this morning, I have been worrying through Heine's Philosophy and Religion. It 's hard reading, I can tell you, and I have done nothing but look in the dictionary at every second line. It seems to me that Heine must have suffered a good deal as I do, and that has given me a more personal interest in what he wrote. But it is painful to see how his opinions shifted. Could n't you take it home and make out these three passages I have marked? I can't clear them up."

"I will try. I think I see your difficulty," answered Wendell, who read German well. "But I must go. When will you hear from the colonel?"

He was unaware of all that this telegram was to answer, as they had agreed that it was best to say nothing about the matter, and Alice, who very likely would have discussed it with him, was still away.

"We must hear to-morrow," replied Edward. "And by the way," he added, smiling, for he had

for some time back suspected what was Alice's relation to Wendell, — "by the way, you will find our friend Mrs. Westerley here to-morrow afternoon. Don't fail to see me, please."

Then Wendell rose.

"One moment," said the sick man. "I have several times meant to ask you not to worry about our little debts, and to say also that when I am better I would like to talk to you about your money matters. I have a notion, from what Miss Ann let fall last week, that perhaps you need a little lift. It is a mere guess, but if I am right I trust that you will say so."

"It is only too true," assented Wendell, a great hope leaping up within him. "I have been very unfortunate in several ways."

"That is enough for me to know. Let us talk it all over to-morrow; but, by the way, give me some idea of what you need; how much, I mean, and don't hesitate about it, please."

"I scarcely dare to say how much. People don't pay my bills, and I — well, in fact, our little investments have all gone wrong, and" —

"Oh, but how much will set you fairly afoot, my dear doctor?"

"If I could borrow five thousand dollars" —

"If you could? You shall. Why not have told me before? Cannot you see that it is a great happiness to feel that I can help one who has so amply helped me? I shall be paying a debt, not making one. No mere money could pay what is due from

me to you; just remember that, doctor, when we come to foot up our relative claims."

"I do not know how to thank you. You little know what it is you are doing for me. It is an inestimable obligation. I have been so wretched about my debts, — and — altogether" —

"Well, let us drop it now. You will hurt me if you make so much of it. What is money after all? Now, if it could buy me escape from pain for a month — or hire new legs" —

"Even if all you say be true, I too have been helped in turn, and I can never forget that whatever has been my fortune as a doctor in this place, you and yours have always stood by me."

"And with reason," exclaimed Edward. "We all of us owe you much, but my own little debts to you, doctor, are debts of the spirit, not to be counted; as Arty says, like the gold in the cloud banks of sunset."

"I don't think I deserve much praise for it," returned Wendell, smiling; "it was certainly for the most part unconscious benevolence, if that can be called benevolence at all."

"I rather fancy," said Ned, who was not to be talked out of his sense of gratitude, — "I rather fancy that what you call 'unconscious benevolence' is merely the outcome of habits of doing kind and fitting things. I can see that it must be a part of a physician's life to think of how he can teach the sick — I mean the crippled sick — to fill up the gaps which disease has made in their means of happiness."

"Yes; it may be so," remarked Wendell thoughtfully. He felt that perhaps he had not considered enough this side of his duties, except when, as in Ned's case, the patient had interested him. He was impressed now, as Edward talked on, with the manner in which by degrees the man of action had become the man of thought, as the shadows of pain and bodily disability had gathered about him; and the idea passed through Wendell's mind that it was like the thoughtfulness which comes at dusk of day, when the body is wearied, and the light which tempts to active ways is spent. "Yes, it may be so," he repeated. "I am afraid we do not always keep ourselves enough alive to the chances of such helpfulness."

"That may very well be; but the calls made upon a man by your work are so various that I can well imagine how hard it must be to give them all their just share of attention."

"You are right," returned Wendell, all of whose better nature was getting food for reflection out of the young man's sick-bed meditations. "A doctor's life has in it, however, a good deal to harm his moral growth, and needs watching. It is difficult not to become despotic from mere habit of control, and still harder to be tender and yet decided, and to keep good tempered amidst the unreasonableness of patients and their friends."

He was half consciously becoming morally autobiographic.

"I suppose," said Edward, "a doctor ought to

be all of a man with the best of a woman. I think I should like to be a physician. The human nature he sees in its nakedness must be interesting, and a man who walks among the tragedies of life must have noble chances to help and guide and set folks right. You know, don't you, the Eastern proverb, 'Where the earthquake has been the best grain grows'?"

"No, I never heard it. It 's good, though, is n't it? But you have cheated me into overstaying my time, and I must go."

"Well, good-by. I think I feel better for our chat. Don't forget the medicine you said you would send, — I hope it will quiet my unruly heart; and don't come till the afternoon. You have always more time to talk then."

Ann Wendell's nature made her deal temperately with the lesser problems of moral life, but sense of wrong or injustice, or the presence of a distinctly neglected duty, disturbed her painfully. When once she was sure of what ought to be done, — and when sure, she was as a rule apt to be very sure, — she became uneasy until she had seized on that duty, and justified herself by shaking it into a state of incapacity to excite her further, much as a quiet terrier will suddenly awaken to the presence of a rat, and with instinctive abruptness of energy destroy its power to disturb him. Such outbreaks of activity antagonistic to the habits of a life baffle the student of human nature because of their ex-

ceptional rarity. We see this illustrated dangerously in animal life by the sudden stroke of the sluggish serpent, and, as concerns man, in the occasional rashness of the timid, the queer lapses of the methodical, or the strange self-committals of the naturally cautious and diplomatic.

Ann had reached such a crisis, and nothing but competent action would satisfy her. She would certainly have her talk with Mr. Gray, and at once; but there came to her now the suspicion that she might feel easier, and better able to face Mrs. Morton's anger, if she were to remind that lady beforehand that the pledge of secrecy applied only to Hester, and to tell her that she thought it an urgent duty to put the responsibility of an ultimate decision upon Hester's nearest relative. Ann would have been wiser had she spoken rather than written; but she dreaded the possibility of being talked out of the course she had laid down for herself, and, to leave no chance of a reply, wrote and dispatched her note about four o'clock, and sending Hester to the city on an errand, told her that she herself desired to talk to Mr. Gray alone, and would detain him until Hester's return. Then, feeling that she had thus cleared her path, she sat down and awaited Mr. Gray's arrival, which she counted upon, as he had telegraphed Hester in the morning that he would be with her about five or six o'clock.

Meanwhile, Wendell went out, telling his sister that he might return late. He was doing some

work for a doctor near by, who, being absent, had left him his carriage. He visited a patient on the way, and then drove rapidly over to the Mortons', full of hope and relief, and thinking as he went along of Alice Westerley. Edward's words had raised him into one of the moods of elation which had been rare or absent of late, and he drove through the lanes making thankful and honest resolutions for the happy future which opened before him. In his pleasant abstraction he passed Ann's messenger, a little lad who did their errands, and presently, leaving his carriage at the stable, walked up to the house. On the porch he saw Alice Westerley alone.

"Sit down here a moment," she said. "Mrs. Morton is with Ned, and Arty is writing letters. I cannot tell how glad I am to see you. You look better."

"Oh, do I? Gladness is a good physician. Alice, my Alice, you will not keep me longer in this horrible suspense? I have sometimes thought, this past week, that you could not care for me as I care for you. Why should you delay so long, and why should I still have to wait until it pleases Colonel Morton to write a telegram? What on earth have we to do with him?"

"Some day, soon, I will tell you why," she replied. "I have been unhappy about Hester. If you had been with me I should have had to tell you, but now — Do you know what that is?" and, laughing, she held up a telegram envelope.

"Oh, Alice!" he exclaimed. "And is it all right about Hester?"

"Yes," she returned, "it is all right. The colonel has said it is to be as Helen wishes. She has the telegram. But you are very nice to think first of Hester."

"And now, Alice" —

"Well?" she said, demurely.

"Your hesitations are over."

"They are over for life."

"My God!" he whispered. He felt like a slave who has found a jewel in his path, and trembled with the sense of a possession beyond even the dreams of love's sweet avarice. She realized at once, with her quick sympathies, the man's intensity of happiness, and looked up at him shyly, with watchful joy.

"I am going to walk home," she said. "Helen thinks I have gone, but I waited for you. I will go slowly, so that you can overtake me easily. Don't be long."

He looked at her, and then glanced about him. She turned quickly to go, but he caught her as she moved, and kissed her passionately.

"Oh, Ezra!" she cried, in alarm. "How could you!"

"I could not help it," he answered. "Ah, now I know you are mine! You will pardon me."

"If, — if," she said, smiling and red, "you will never, never do it again?"

"Never," he replied, and went into the house.

While this little matter was being thus arranged on the porch, Mrs. Morton was seated by her son's bedside. The telegram for which Edward had eagerly waited had come, and for the second time he was reading it aloud, when Arthur suddenly walked into his chamber. "What 's that, Ned?" he asked. "The answer from father?"

Mrs. Morton had meant that he should know only the general tenor of the dispatch until Ann had been seen, and the whole matter deprived of its mischievous possibilities. But fate had overruled her, and her son had heard enough to make it necessary that he should hear the whole. There was no help for it now, and she quickly cast about her for aid as she gave him the paper.

"That 's droll," said Arthur, reading it aloud. "What does my father mean? He says, '*It is absurd. Use your own judgment. See letter.*' What does he mean by 'absurd' and all that?"

"It refers," returned Mrs. Morton, "to another question, which does not altogether concern you. The latter part does. Are you not satisfied, my son?"

Edward looked up. He hated indirectness, but he was silent.

"Oh, thank you, mother," said Arthur, rising. "And you will love her, too, mother, and you will feel satisfied, won't you?"

"I always did love her, but" —

"Oh, don't spoil it, mother," begged Ned.

"My son's wife will be my daughter," she an-

swered, and then she kissed Arthur. "I will go over to see Hester to-night, and now I must send this to Ann Wendell." So she wrote a little note of caution to Ann, and gave it, with the inclosed telegram, to Arthur, that he might send his happy news to Hester Gray. Then Mrs. Morton rose from the bedside.

"Don't go yet, mother," said Edward. "I want to say something. I have learned lately that my friend, Dr. Wendell, is in debt. I don't think he has succeeded as he ought to have done, and the little money he and his sister had seems to have been badly invested, and so far as I can make it out has been lost."

Mrs. Morton interrupted him: "I never did think he had any sense about business matters, and I am equally sure that he is one of those people who must buy what they chance to want at the moment. Your uncle Richard was much that kind of person. I paid his debts twice. Did Dr. Wendell ask you to help him?"

"No, he did not. I have lent him a little money from time to time. Perhaps we, who have never had to think about money, do not realize the temptations of people like Wendell, who have refined wants and scanty means. I have offered to aid him further, but to do so effectually will, I fancy, demand at least five thousand dollars. I could not arrange this, lying helpless here in bed, and that is why I want to trouble you. In a week or two, or a little later, I shall have all I want; but I spent

so much on the Sanitary and the soldiers' orphan business that really I shall lack at least a thousand of what he will need."

"But don't you think, my son" —

"Think! Mother," he said, wearily, "I am past thinking. I can only feel. And besides, I am a sick man, and I do not want to wait to do this thing. I wish to do it now, at once."

Mrs. Morton's impulse was always to act in accordance with Edward's wishes, but the habit of advising was also strong.

"I meant," she observed, "to ask you to think, dear Ned, if this is not a rather inconsiderate use of a large sum of money. I really cannot see what claim Dr. Wendell has on you, and I do certainly think there is a strange want of propriety, to say the least, in using his position as a doctor to get money out of a man so much his junior."

"Please not to say that. You hurt me when you talk in that way of Wendell. You forget, mother, that it was I who worried out of him the secret of his debts, and that it was I who offered him help, — not he who asked it. I don't feel, mother, that you are ever quite just to the doctor."

"I have tried to be just, Edward. I never have thoroughly liked him, but nothing ever goes quite straight, and the next thing will be that Alice Westerley will marry him."

"I wish she would," said Edward, "for you would adopt him, then."

"How much have you lent him, Edward?"

"About six or eight hundred dollars. I never kept any account of it."

"I suppose not, Ned; and now you want to lend him five thousand?"

"Yes, mother; but let us drop this as a business matter. My love of books and botany and the microscope, and in fact all that has made life endurable of late, has been as it were a gift from this man. That the debt is uncommercial is the more reason why you and I should recognize it."

Had it been any one but Edward, Mrs. Morton would have smiled, amused at the debit and credit account thus set before her; but this large-eyed, pale, and wasting youth, and the shrunken, bony hand, so white and feeble, now resting in hers, held her, so that she seemed to become a part of the sick frame, and to feel with its gentle heart, until her worldly criticisms faded, with some realizing sense of the slight shame he felt that she should hesitate.

"You always have your way with me, Ned," she said, softly.

"And you like it," he replied, smiling. "But kiss me, mother, and then go away, please. I am in a good deal of pain, and I shall fight it better alone."

"And I have made you talk so much, darling."

"That has its pleasant side, too, mother. Ah, there is a good deal of sweetness in life yet!"

"If only I could give you more!"

"But you are its biggest sugar-bowl, as it is," he returned, laughing, that he might send her away

feeling, as he knew she would, that if after all he was able to jest with her he could not be so very ill.

As he saw her leave the room, and heard her through the half-open door, sit down at her writing-table, he set his teeth, and with clenched hands wrestled with the agony of gathering pain.

"My God!" he muttered, "what good can there be in pain like this? One cannot think for it! If pain does not make a man think, what use can it be? Ah, that is a let-up."

Humor, in some natures apparently the quickest at call among the lighter sprites who inhabit the caverns of the mind, which no illness destroys, and which is peculiarly apt to rise on the sudden subsidence of pain, was strong in this young man.

"Ah, if I only had hold of the grandfather, or whoever he was, that left me this little legacy of his laziness or his wickedness! Arty says 'every one is in the higher sense his own grandfather.' I wish I was mine. I'd feel more responsible. He says that's Emerson. I don't believe it. By George, I must have that anodyne!"

There were two vials, much alike, on the little table by his bed; one the medicine sent by the doctor the day before. Still resolute not to let his mother know of his increasing anguish, he tried to read the directions on the labels, but failing to see them distinctly, uncorked one of the bottles, thinking that the familiar odor of the anodyne, to which he was accustomed, might suffice to guide him. He

found, however, that it was not what he sought. As he set it down his hand shook so much that he upset the vial, and spilt a large part of its contents between the bed and the table. He recorked it, murmuring, "I am no better than a child," and with a moan of pain gave up the task. To his relief he heard Arthur coming up-stairs, laughing and talking with Wendell, — two eager, joyous men. They lingered on the top landing for what seemed to the sufferer an age; but he waited with a stern patience which they who have seen or have themselves felt the grip of such suffering can alone appreciate.

At last they came in.

"How are you to-day?" asked Wendell, gently.

"In torment," said Edward, under his breath. "But take care, or mother may hear."

At this moment Mrs. Morton entered the room, excited and angry.

"Let me speak to you a moment, doctor," she exclaimed.

"What is it?" asked Edward, who had rarely seen his quiet mother so manifestly disturbed.

"Matter enough," she said. "Ann Wendell writes me, as she says, from a sense of duty, to remind me that she has never pledged herself to conceal that ridiculous story from any one but Hester, and that this afternoon she means to tell it all to Mr. Henry Gray."

Wendell and Arthur looked amazed.

"What is it?" inquired Wendell.

"Your sister," replied Mrs. Morton, too vexed for reflection, "has got a craze about that stupid nonsense of poor Hester's father having been killed by my husband, and thinks Hester ought to know it."

"Ann!" cried Wendell, — "Ann, of all people! Why, Mrs. Morton, she and I talked this over, a year ago at least. I never dreamed of its having any practical hold on her. Is n't there some mistake?"

"No; here is her note. It is an old story and a foolish one," said Mrs. Morton, "but it will make mischief."

"Let her tell it," said Edward with his usual good sense. "It is time we had done with it."

"And that was the meaning of the telegram, was it?" observed Arthur. "I heard my father once mention it in France as a singular incident. But great heavens, to tell Hester! and to tell her now!"

"And just as this telegram has come," exclaimed Mrs. Morton, "to want to talk it over with Mr. Gray, whom we barely know, and who does not want Hester to marry! What inconceivable folly! Just think how he may see fit to put it to Hester!"

"They both ought to know it some time," said Edward; "but it should be told quietly, and not by one who believes it."

"But it is simply ludicrous," returned Wendell.

"Ludicrous or not," said Edward, "we must stop her, and at once, too. Mother, order the doctor's carriage. Drive home at once, doctor, and

possibly you may be in time. You can stop her, can't you? Hurry, mother."

"I think so, — I hope so," rejoined Wendell, who was vexed and flurried, and knew better than they what Ann was when on what Mrs. Westerley called the war-path of a duty.

Mrs. Morton had gone out at the first mention of action.

"Great heavens, how I suffer!" said Edward. "Doctor, give me the anodyne before you go. This pain will kill me some day. It is like knives in my heart!"

Wendell was terribly annoyed at his sister's folly, and in hot haste to repair it. "Is this the bottle I sent you to-day?" he asked. "I can't see; your curtains make the room so dark."

"Yes, that is it, I believe," returned Edward, groaning. "Look for yourself, I really don't know, and for God's sake hurry; I shall die of pain. But about Ann, your sister, — that is more important. I forget other people in my misery. Let Arty give me my medicine. But be quick, some one. Now do go."

Wendell glanced hastily at the vials in the half light of the darkened room, and taking up the one which was yet full, asked Arthur to put it on the mantel.

"There, Arthur," said Wendell, "is the anodyne, the one left on the table. It has been partly used." He spoke low, adding, "A teaspoonful, and be quick. I shall return as soon as possible. He is very ill."

"But perhaps you had better wait."

"No, I must go. He wants me to go. There is not a moment to lose. The medicine will ease him. Don't delay;" and speaking as he moved toward the door, he went away annoyed and in angry haste.

Mrs. Morton came into the room as the doctor left it, and while Arthur was pouring out the medicine.

"Is that his anodyne?" she asked.

"Yes, mother, it is all right. Lift him, please."

Then he put the glass to his brother's lips, saying, "There, dear Ned, that will help you."

Edward drank it hastily.

"Oh, mother, that pain — that pain! I was sure it would kill me. Bring back the doctor!" he suddenly called, in a sharply pitched voice. "Quick!" Arthur, without question, gave one glance, and fled from the room. Then Edward looked up at his mother with an infinite tenderness in his eyes, the thankfulness of a departing guest.

"What is it?" she cried. "Oh, what is the matter? Speak, Ned, — speak to me!"

But there was no answer. His face whitened; an awful semblance of a smile went over it. He was dead.

For an instant she said no word, but paused motionless by his side. Then a wild terror seized her. She picked up the vial, which had been left on the table by the bed, and staggered to the window. On the label she read. "*Poison. Tincture of Aconite. Dose one drop.*"

"My God!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Ned, my son, my own boy! and Arty, — it will kill him!"

For a moment she stood perfectly still, gazing at the label. Her faculties seemed to gain a superhuman acuteness. All that was involved in this discovery came swiftly before her, — all that it meant for herself and for others, all the vistas of interminable misery for her only remaining child. The clear conception of what had happened and would happen was followed by the concentration of mind which is possible only when every power within the mental sphere is brought to a focus by such intensity of will as some one of the despotic instincts can alone call forth. Turning to the mantelpiece, she seized the bottle which stood where Arthur had placed it. With the vials clinking in her trembling hand, she moved swiftly to the window, looking, as she went, at the label, on which was written, "Anodyne. Take one teaspoonful as directed." She returned quickly to execute her purpose of placing the anodyne on the table at the bedside. The dead, gray face smote her, as she neared it, as with a physical blow, and, tottering, she dropped one of the vials. She stooped, groping about to find it; but this brief delay was fatal, for as she rose again with the bottle in her hand, Alice Westerley and Wendell hastily entered. At the terrible spectacle before them Wendel, always impulsive and emotional, lost the self-control which the doctor commonly learns to keep in the face of the most abrupt tragedies; but he loved Arthur

well, and at sight of the dead a sudden terror dazed him, as with a quick step he strode to the bedside.

"My God, Mrs. Morton," he cried, "he is dead! Where is the medicine he took?"

"Here," said Mrs. Morton, firmly, handing him the anodyne. "I took it from the table."

She was too late. Obeying an impulse, regretted an instant later, he put to his lips the spoon which Arthur had used, and as suddenly let it fall, with a shock of remembrance at his own responsibility for what had occurred.

Alice Westerley saw his dismay. She shut the door which was near her.

"Oh, doctor," she asked, "what is it? What has happened? There is something wrong! Did he take the wrong medicine, Helen?"

"I — I don't know," returned Wendell, who had recognized the taste of the deadly poison, and was trying to collect his routed faculties. "When I left him he was in great pain, but I did not think in any danger."

At this moment, Arthur, who had delayed to call a servant to take charge of Wendell's horse, came in abruptly. He was painfully excited.

"Is he very ill? Oh, doctor, what is the matter?" Then he saw the open-eyed, blank face of death. "But he is dead! Impossible! — how can he be dead?" Then, coming nearer, he looked at Edward, and turning on Wendell seized him by the arm, saying with the strange, hoarse utterance of an awful dread, "What was it? What did it?

Was the medicine right? I gave him what he always takes! Did I make a mistake?"

Wendell saw his own peril.

"Hush, Arty," he said; "here is the bottle. Look, it is all right. No one is to blame."

Arthur seized the vial, and strode to the window; then he sunk into a chair, exclaiming, "Thank God for that, at least! I was afraid, mother, — I was afraid I had made some mistake. Oh, my brother!"

"There has been no mistake," said Wendell. "Take your mother away, my boy."

Helen Morton, stern and tearless, put her hand on Arthur's shoulder. "Help me to my room," she murmured; "I am faint;" but as she passed Wendell she gathered force enough to say, "Thank you," and went out like one who, on the crumbling verge of some abyss, has by a desperate effort won a firmer ground, but who now, when the effort is over, feels all the accumulation of the horror which, while in action, it was impossible to realize. Full well she knew that Alice and Wendell understood what had happened, but Arthur, at least, did not, and come what might he must never know.

Alice and Wendell were left with the dead.

"Wait one moment," she whispered, and went to the door, where the anxious servants were collecting. "Go down-stairs," she said, addressing them, "and let Mrs. Morton's maid go to her at once. I shall want some of you presently. I will ring. Mr. Edward is dead. It is some heart trouble, I believe. Don't make a noise."

Alice was quiet and collected. She had, as she thought, seen through the matter only too clearly, and knew at once that Arthur must have made a mistake, and that for the present a great calamity had been averted. Closing the door she turned to Wendell.

"Oh, Ezra!" she said, in a suppressed voice, "how terrible! I don't mean for Edward, — God has been kind to him, — but Arthur and Helen! Oh, Ezra, what shall we do? I wish I had not known it all. It is such a dreadful thing to know; and how can it be hidden? How can it?"

"If," he replied, "no one ever speaks of it to Arthur, he will certainly not suspect anything. I — I had to set his mind at rest."

"Yes, yes, I know," she returned; "but what a sad necessity!"

She knew that he had not told Arthur the truth, but not for a moment did she blame him, nor could she dream how black the lie for self-protection had really been.

By this time Wendell had regained full possession of his mental powers. Many strange and dreadful possibilities went through his mind. He saw that he was safe if he played out the *rôle* which hard circumstance had arranged for him, and which he had seemed to accept as a means of saving Arthur. There are men — and how many let each of us say — who would have frankly taken on themselves the blame of Edward's death. Had Wendell done so, he would have drawn to

himself for life the woman at his side. Even now she was thinking of the immense courage which, from her estimate, it must have taken to shelter another with a falsehood. Unfortunately, Wendell's instincts of self-defense betrayed him, as they are apt to betray a too emotional and too imaginative nature; and when, later, he came to think it all over more calmly, he felt that were his true share known, Alice would shrink from him in horror. But men of half-feminine temperament rarely understand the grandeur of sacrifice of which women are capable. There are women who can love men they do not respect; but there are others who cannot love unless they also respect, and to them, when once their love is given, the path of some difficult duty is no less the path to their larger love than it is, as the poet has sung, the path to glory.

Alice had said that what he had done was a sad necessity.

"I think," he returned, "that you had better advise Mrs. Morton never to mention, nor discuss with Arthur, the subject of his brother's death."

"But you, — you will have to say of what he died; and is n't there some form? It is you I am thinking of. Won't you have to give a certificate about the cause of his death? Is not that usual?"

Strange to say, Wendell was more disturbed by this necessity of disobeying the habitual moral code of his profession than by the mere fact of the lie itself.

"Yes, I must do it," he rejoined, — "I must do

it; there is no help for it. And what a sacrifice!"

"It does seem more than should be asked of any one," she returned sadly. "How can you do it?"

"I shall simply say that it was death from paralysis of the heart, which is true. Can you see anything else I can do?"

"I cannot," she replied; "but I should rather do it myself than have you do it. I would rather lie than have you lie," and she began to feel a gathering horror at this discussion by the side of the mute form before them. "Do what you think right. God sees, and He alone can judge!" She would have submitted to any torture to win for him some escape from what, as she grew calmer, all her nature increasingly abhorred, and abhorred in vain. "Let us go. I cannot talk any longer, and — and — won't you close his eyes, Ezra?"

Wendell bent over the dead man, troubled deeply by his own capacity to evolve ideas which shook him emotionally.

"Now," he thought, — "now, perhaps he knows all. And how well he loved me!" Twice he touched the open lids, and twice drew back. At last, he closed them softly. "And does he blame me?" he murmured.

Then Alice kissed the dead face, and went out, followed by Wendell. A few minutes later she came out of Mrs. Morton's room.

"Mrs. Morton wants to see you to-morrow, early," she said. "You have had a sore trial,"

and, standing on the step above him, she kissed him, and went up-stairs again. Wendell stayed a moment looking after her, and then, turning to meet Arthur, said a few words of commonplace consolation, such as people are apt to say on these occasions.

"You are very kind," rejoined the young man. "You are always very kind. Since I have had a quiet moment I remember that you pointed out to me the vial, so that of course there could not be any mistake."

Wendell hesitated a moment.

"I really don't remember. I suppose I did. Yes, of course I did. But why should you be troubled about the medicine? It was his heart disease that killed him. It had nothing to do with his medicine. That was all right."

He might yet have to say that he had thus spoken to insure Arthur's peace of mind.

"It's a great relief," said the latter, — "a greater than any one can imagine."

"Well, never speak of it to your mother," rejoined Wendell. "It's all right. No one was to blame. Best never to discuss it with your mother, or any one. It is God's doing." Then he had a sudden horror of what he had said. "I mean," he added, "it could n't have been helped." The young fellow wrung his hand and turned sadly away, as the doctor went slowly and thoughtfully down the staircase.

XXIII.

Soon there fell upon the house the quiet with which we surround those who have no longer the power to hear, and the servants went and came with the want of naturalness which death inevitably brings to all who are not simply crushed by grief. Arthur, too deeply hurt to be of any use, sent for Mr. Wilmington, and had a curious wonderment because the old man, who was much attached to Edward, did not seem to be more shocked and more visibly distressed. Arthur was too young to have learned that age rarely retains life's primal capacity to grieve, and that for it a young life cut short does not awaken the same sense of premature wreck as it does in the young themselves. Age is too near eternity to value justly human hopes. Yet the elder man's calm was of service to Arthur, and steadied him; and then, too, the following day Hester came over with Ann Wendell to see him.

Wendell had felt that it was wise to stay as long as possible at the Mortons', so that it was near dusk before he reached home.

He found Ann comfortably seated in a rocking-chair, her work on her lap, the shadows of evening having for a time suspended her task. She was singing one of the old Puritan hymn tunes with which she was wont to enliven her labor or gratify

her leisure. Wendell stood still a moment at the door.

"Ah! Is that you, Ezra?" she said. "How late you are! You are getting very unpunctual. Your tea must be stone cold."

Her quiet little criticism — she smiled as she spoke — exasperated him.

"You, at least, seem very comfortable!" he exclaimed, in a tone so hard and unnatural that his sister rose instantly, facing him. Then, even in the failing light, Ann saw that in his face which shocked her.

"What has happened? Something has gone wrong. What is it?"

He hesitated a moment before saying, "You won't be so comfortable when I tell you." He recalled with an approach to fury that it was the haste caused by Ann's obstinate folly that had been the true cause of the disaster which had befallen him.

"Why do you speak so to me, brother?" she said. "There is nothing wrong with you, is there?"

"No; but Edward Morton died suddenly, this afternoon."

"Dead! Edward dead! How dreadful, Ezra! How sad for you, brother, but not for him — not for him. I have long believed it could not be far off; but death is always near, and always far off. What can I do for them? Don't you think I should go over there at once?"

"No one will want you," he answered abruptly. "Edward was in great pain when I got there, and your letter did not make things any better."

"You cannot mean that what I did hurt him! How could it do that? How could I have hurt any one I loved so well? And it had to be done, — it had to be done."

"Yes, and so have all stupid follies, I suppose."

"Ezra!"

"Oh, I don't mean it killed him, but it did make him worse. How could it do otherwise?"

"Will you tell me how the boy died, brother?" She spoke quietly and softly.

"I can't," he said. "I — Don't ask me any more about it yet. I was never in my life so upset by anything."

"Very well. Don't say any more now. We will talk of it another time. But why did Mrs. Morton trouble the sick lad with my letter? Surely that was needless."

"She was so angry, Ann, that I think she lost her head. She broke out about it before both the boys. A nice business you have made of it! I call it wicked."

Ann's eyes filled; if ever tears were bitter, hers were bitter then. Her incessant sacrifices for her brother had been too purely instinctive to be counted by her as of any weight in their mutual relations. Secure of his affection, she asked no more return for the gentle offices of life than the mother-bird asks of her young; but that any one she loved should think she would deliberately do a wrong action disturbed her deeply.

"What we think right," she said, "is all the

right we can do. The issues are in other hands. Please not to say I am wicked, Ezra; but you did not say that, did you, — not that, exactly?"

"I do not know what I said. I trust that you were not fool enough to talk to Mr. Gray. In future I hope you will consult me about things which concern me more than any one else."

"I will do as you say, brother, as to anything in which my conscience is not concerned."

"Conscience! I am tired of hearing of it. Did you see Mr. Gray?"

"I did not. He failed to come, as he said he would. He was delayed, and has sent a letter for you."

Wendell took it from her. "When he does come, Ann, you must not speak to him at all about this matter. I shall attend to it myself."

"Oh," said Ann, shocked into unusual subjugation, "if you will do so, I shall be much relieved, Ezra. You are certainly the proper person; but you did not appear to think it quite so important as it seemed to me."

"Very well," he returned, "we shall see;" but he made no such pledge as Ann desired.

"Has Mr. Morton been heard from?" she asked. "Somehow I cannot feel at ease about it. I just seem to be putting aside a duty. And this awful death! It seems to bring one's duties closer, Ezra."

"Perhaps," rejoined Wendell, "it may comfort you to know that Colonel Morton has been heard from, and that he says it is simply absurd; so I

trust we have now heard the last of it, Ann. It has made mischief enough to satisfy any woman."

Her brother's positiveness confused her. She was not clear as to being in any way responsible, and concluded that Ezra's outbreak was due partly to his grief, and partly to the irritability of a man not quite well, and now worn out by the strain the day's events had put upon him. She had the maternal feeling that unusual peevishness must be due to some distinct failure in health.

"You must be sick, brother," she said gently. "You never have talked to me this way before!"

It was not in Wendell to like to wound, and he was made uncomfortable by his sister's increasing distress; but we cannot strike and not hurt our own knuckles.

"I am perfectly wretched," he returned. "This death has been too much for me. You must forgive me, sister."

"Don't ask me to forgive you, brother. It hurts me to think that you feel I have anything to forgive. You will go and lie down, won't you? I will not mention that business any more."

"Thank you," he said, and went up-stairs.

Once in his room he threw himself on the bed, and with his hands clasped behind his head lay still and thought.

He was annoyed that he could not steadily control his own logical processes. He tried to feel clear that he was not entirely to blame for Edward's death, and then essayed with some ease to

persuade himself that Arthur was the person most blamable, and yet that even if he himself had been hasty or careless he was bound to protect Arthur, and that to speak frankly would never so entirely clear Arthur as to be of any use. Still, no sooner had he seemingly satisfied himself than thoughts which rose unsummoned, like ghosts, startled him, and filled his mind with new and horrible suggestions of future risks and dangers. Vivid and terrible images of the fatal moment of haste came before him, and with a memory of his physical recoil he saw again the dead, and his own hand stretched out to close the open eyes. It was growing dark. He rose and lit the gas. As he crossed the room he remembered the Middle-Age belief that the blood would flow anew when the slayer touched the dead slain. There was a grotesque horror in the idea that in a man who had been poisoned this could not be. He sat down, with his face in his hands, and gave way to a strange sense of mental confusion, a valueless jostling of incongruous thoughts and memories and fears, which seemed to come and go on the stage of consciousness, until at last the giddiness which sometimes follows great emotional tension made him stagger to the bed, on which he fell heavily.

Then happening to see Mr. Gray's letter, which had dropped on the floor, and being a little eased by the supine position, the physical distress of his vertigo having for the time cleared his head of its thronging and uncontrollable phantoms, he opened

the envelope. It contained a kind note, in which Mr. Gray desired the doctor to tell Hester that, if pleasant for her, he wished her in a week or two to go with him to Baltimore, and farther south if the state of the country made that possible. He repeated his thanks to Miss Wendell and her brother, and said that even if Hester wished to return to them for a time, he would like now to take charge of the sum placed in Wendell's hands. He hoped, however, that Dr. Wendell would not feel unwilling to retain a thousand dollars, as he had before asked him to do, and also would kindly render him a full account of the extent to which money had been expended for Hester's board and dress. He desired that the nine thousand dollars might be remitted to him in New York by draft as soon as convenient.

This added blow fell with but little weight on Wendell. Capacity to feel anxiety has its limits in mysterious failures of response in the brain cells, and in some people convulsive explosions of emotional torment make impossible for a time the normal activities which an intellectual conception of a difficulty or trouble should awaken. He had a certain obscure sense that this matter had been provided for, until suddenly he remembered that this idea was due to Edward's promise to lend him money. A more commercially minded man would very early have presented to himself this as one, at least, of the embarrassments which arose out of this calamity, but Wendell was not prone to think even enough of money. To do him justice, through all

his fears, and efforts at self-vindication, there was forever coming and going a remembrance of how dear to him had been the young man who was dead, how noble he had been, how tender and true a friend. Recalling Edward's self-sacrificing character, he even tried to find in this an excuse for his own concealment, not for the moment setting before himself the conception that in hiding the truth he was allowing an innocent person to bear his guilt, even if only in the minds of Mrs. Morton and Mrs. Westerley.

"And really," he said to himself, "a brother should have been the most careful;" and he thus confused himself at moments into a state of rest of mind. Many people are helped at such times by their incapacity to think clearly, and at all times Wendell, who was admirably veneered with intelligence, was incapable of attaining in any of his logical processes the definiteness of results which is reached by more thoroughly trained intellects.

By degrees, this matter of the money he was unable to return to its owner began to relate itself painfully to Alice Westerley. Too well he knew what sentence he might have to read in those eyes, whose light would be to him as the sheen on the blade of the angel of judgment. For the time the nearness of this peril routed all other terrors, and he sat on the bedside holding the letter and thinking the vain thoughts of a man without resource. At last he felt again the dizziness which is so apt, upon concentration of mental effort, to return to a brain

recently overstrained by either work or emotion. Then he began to fear lest some horrible physical incapacity should come upon him, and paralyze his activity. Stuffing the letter into his pocket, he opened the door and called, "Ann! Bring me some whisky." He took a half tumblerful, and quieting her fears said that he would undress and go to bed. Then he locked the door, and still confused threw himself dressed on the bed, and was soon in a deep sleep, brought on by the unaccustomed stimulus.

The next morning his head ached, and he went back to bed, asking Ann to request a friendly physician near by to see for him such of his cases as needed care. She wrote also to Mrs. Morton that, overcome by the events of the day before, he had remained at home, suffering from a severe headache.

He was glad, indeed, when Ann herself suggested this course to him, and felt it an inconceivable relief not so soon again to have to enact his part before Mrs. Morton, and possibly Alice. From the former there came kind inquiries, and later in the day a note from Alice Westerley. It was simply a loving little remembrance in words, with of course no allusion to the scene through which they had so lately passed.

Towards evening a servant came over to ask Dr. Wendell for the usual formal attestation of a death. We have said that he had looked forward to this act with dread. He remembered too well the day

when he had failed to meet a professional obligation brought on him by the unlooked-for chances of war. It had been known to few, and not to Ann, but he had bitterly regretted his weakness, and had only by degrees succeeded in putting it aside from his life; and now again he was to sin against the moral code of his profession. The need was too urgent to admit of long reflection. He wrote with haste the name and age, gave as the cause of death paralysis of the heart, and signed his name. After putting the paper in an envelope, he took it out and looked at it again, wondering whether his signature would exhibit any of the peculiar feelings with which he wrote it.

The next morning, early, he received a note from Mrs. Morton, asking him to call as soon as he was able, and containing other matter of so grave a nature that he hastened to write a reply, at the close of which he excused his prolonged absence on the plea of continued suffering.

The constant petty need for self-command which becomes a part of the social training of women like Mrs. Morton is apt to make effectual those larger efforts which are now and then demanded by some grave exigency. But supplementing this, Mrs. Morton had one of those natures which are steadied by great emergencies, and sometimes unduly excited by small ones. In the presence of her dead son, she broke into the passionate grief of sorely wounded motherhood; but away from this dreary reminder, she shocked or surprised all her friends,

save Alice, by a calmness and self-control to the mystery of which they had no clew. Three days after her son's death she said to Alice Westerley, "I have been unwilling to talk to you, or to any one; but now I have made up my mind, and I want to say some things to you, and then I desire never again to speak of them or hear of them."

Alice had dreaded this talk, but on the whole was not sorry to have it over. She too had something which she felt must be said.

"I think," she answered, "you are very right, Helen. I have not ceased to feel how hard it is for you that a thing as sacred and sweet as the ending of this dear life should come to you surrounded with such awful bitterness of suffering and such unusual trials. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, there is nothing. You understand me; that is something you have done for me. Beyond it there is nothing, — nothing! When once this talk is over, we will let its remembrance be as a thing that is dead and buried with my boy; but now there are things I must say, — I cannot live alone with them."

"And what, dear Helen?"

"Have you thought, Alice, that Arthur, whose carelessness cost my Edward's life, is his sole heir? That he ignorantly profits by it? That his way to an easy, happy marriage is smoothed by this deed?"

"Oh, Helen, don't talk of a pure accident as

'this deed'! It sounds too much like speaking of a voluntary act."

"I spoke as a malicious world might speak. What would such a story become with the comments of Mrs. Grace or a half dozen others we can name? What would happen to my son if such a whisper reached him? He would say, 'I cannot touch this money;' and then this feeling would be called remorse. Oh, I have tasted this cup in all its bitterness, Alice!"

"But he never can hear. He never will hear, unless you betray yourself. I trust he has not the faintest idea of his share in it, poor lad!"

"Not the least, Alice. He has seen the doctor's certificate, and you yourself heard what Dr. Wendell said to him. No; I do believe he has not the very faintest suspicion. Indeed, how could he? But I shudder lest something should turn up to make him inquire further. Suppose I were ill, or dying, and were to let slip some word of terror; and never, never, will this be out of my mind! Oh, I shudder to think of it! Even the most unlikely possibilities become probable to me, and it seems to me that there is no precaution I can take which would be needless. And you, — can you always be sure of yourself? And there is Dr. Wendell. The very ease with which he accepted the situation alarmed me. It seemed like weakness."

"Indeed, my friend," returned Alice, "you are making yourself distrustful without just cause. Like you, I too have thought over all this sad affair.

To tell you the truth, I think we were all wrong: you and I, who were swept away by our love, and Dr. Wendell, who nobly accepted a compromising position to shelter one who is not of his kindred. You and I may lie, and believe that he who knows all things and the secrets of all hearts will forgive us; but, Helen, whether you — whether you had a right to permit a man in Dr. Wendell's place to protect your son at the cost of his own honor — is — I think — you won't mind what I say? — I think it wrong."

Mrs. Morton reflected a moment. "I did not ask him to do it," she said.

"No, but you accepted the sacrifice, and you thanked him."

"And could I have been human and not have done so? Put yourself in my place. If Arthur had been your son, what would you have done?"

"I cannot say, Helen. No one can put herself in another's place. And yet — and yet I cannot think you were right; and, dear, to blame you even in thought at a time like this seems to me cruel."

"I must say, Alice, that you appear to think more of Dr. Wendell than of me."

"I think of you both. He has not in this matter the stake you have, and for him it must be inconceivably painful. And yet I confess that I see now no escape. It might have been better to have faced the truth openly at first, and taken the consequences, — better, dear, even for Arthur."

"You cannot expect me, at least, to think so. But now, Alice, that things have gone so far, what course except silence is left us and him? I mean, what in your judgment? Mine has never varied. I shall defend my boy at all costs, — at any one's cost."

"I see no other course," Alice sadly replied. "We have been wrong, and — now we must abide by it," and silently she thought of Wendell.

"Why," questioned Mrs. Morton, — "why do you suppose Dr. Wendell has not been here? I sent for him."

"But you told me that Miss Ann said he was sick."

"Yes, and he has written me himself to the same effect, but he must know how intensely desirous I am to see him. She says it is a headache. A headache!"

"Oh, I suppose that is a mere excuse. Cannot you imagine that a man may have been shaken by what he went through? And he is a very sensitive man, Helen."

"I know all that, but I think he should have come. I want to feel more sure about him."

"And you distrust him after what he has done for you?"

"I — I distrust every one, — him, you, myself, Arthur, every one! I must feel more certain, or it will kill me!"

"But how can you feel more certain?"

"I don't know — yet, but I must. I do not like this delay in coming here."

"It seems to me natural enough."

Mrs. Morton was silent for a moment, and then said, —

"Did I tell you what my poor Edward said to me about Dr. Wendell being a good deal in debt?"

"No, but it does not surprise me. He must have had many expenses; and there was Hester."

"Edward wished to put him at ease, and had not enough money on hand, so he asked me to lend him a thousand dollars for a few days."

"And did you?"

"I said I would. I did not think Edward was right, but you know, dear, I never refused that boy anything."

"And why do you speak of this now?" queried Alice, who was all alive with a terrible anticipation. She understood Helen Morton well, and knew that she was at times determined to carry her plans at any cost, and that in a difficulty, such as the one before her, no considerations were likely to arise except how to meet it.

Her friend's manner was full of suspicion for Mrs. Morton.

"I thought," she explained, "I would fulfill Edward's wishes, and I sent Dr. Wendell the amount Edward mentioned as desirable."

"How much?" asked Alice, faintly.

"Five thousand dollars, — a check, dear."

"You sent him five thousand dollars!"

"Yes. It would have been my boy's wish."

"My God, how horrible!" exclaimed Alice.

"Horrible! What do you mean, Alice!" demanded Mrs. Morton, sternly.

"I mean," said Alice, "that you did not do this as a gift from our dead Edward. You gave it as a bribe to silence! That is why you gave it. And how could you do it? A man does a wrong thing from noble motives, and because you never liked him you insult him with an offer of money, and this when you knew him to be in difficulties! And the folly of it, — the folly of it!" Alice rose and walked to and fro, agitated and angry.

"You told me that you could not put yourself in my place," said Mrs. Morton, "and now I am sure of it. I dare not trust any one, and I must make myself certain."

"And does this make you certain? It makes you insecure, if that were possible. Do you suppose a gentleman — do you suppose a man like Wendell will let you smirch his motives with even the semblance of a bribe?" She recalled Wendell's sad and refined face, and saw, as it were, the scorn of his lips. "He will send it back to you," she affirmed, "and you will have hurt a fast friend, or even made an enemy. I should hate you were I he."

Helen looked the surprise she felt. "Read that," she said.

Alice took the open note; and reading it, life grew black before her. Its sweetness went out of it, and belief in man, and trust in God. It was this: —

"Dear Mrs. Morton, your kind note, with its inclosure, fulfilling my dear friend's wishes as expressed to me, has touched me deeply. I hasten to thank you, and to say how great a relief it is to me. I can never forget the terms in which you speak of my services to him, and I thank you again, both for the act and the words which accompany it. You do not speak of it as a loan, but as that I must of course consider it. I shall, I think, be able to see you to-morrow or the day after. I must ask, as I am sensitive about such matters, that you will not mention this to Arthur or to Mrs. Westerley."

"Not mention this to Mrs. Westerley?" said Alice, standing with the note in her hand.

"Of course," returned Mrs. Morton, "that was a matter for my discretion. You had to know it, as you know all the rest of it."

Alice felt that she must get out into the air. The paper fell on the floor as she spoke in broken tones: "Oh, he said well who said there is no wrong which has not a child! You have done a wicked thing. Don't talk to me any more now. I cannot bear it! May God forgive you, — I never can! Let me go, — let me go! Life is over, — life is dead."

"Alice, — Alice!" exclaimed Mrs. Morton, alarmed. "I could not have dreamed of this! Don't go!"

"I must, — I must! Don't stop me! I shall die! I shall fall dead if I stay here! Room,

room!" she cried, wildly. "Let me pass! Let me go!" and with a face that scared her friend she left the room, and presently was moving swiftly across the lawn. Walking with a fierce energy which represented in physical action the agony of restrained emotion, she passed through the lanes. It was the close of June, and the air was warm even in the afternoon, so that in her own house the long windows were open to the floor. Alice was glad of it, as it enabled her to enter unnoticed. She caught at the nearest chair, sat down at once, and a minute later was aware of Hester at her side.

"Oh," said the girl, "I am glad to have found you. How are they all?"

But hearing no answer, she came close to the chair. Alice was shaking, unable to speak. Hester turned in alarm to call for help, when Alice said explosively, "Don't — ring!" Hester was quick-witted, and her life in a doctor's house had not left her quite ignorant. She knew at once that this was an attack of nervous agitation, and that Alice was unwilling to have it seen. She closed the door, and kneeling without a word held Alice's hands steadily in hers, while the elder woman set herself with great effort to overcome the physical agitation which now possessed her. She was suffering from one of those wild insurrections which seem to be the natural result of the social laws which so continually crush into expressionless silence the normal outbursts of our passions or emotions. By

and by Alice grew more quiet, and at last her tremor ceased, and she fell back with a sigh of relief.

"You are better," said Hester; "but shall I not run home and ask Dr. Wendell to come? He is not out, you know, to-day, but I am sure he would come at once if he knew you were ill."

"No," replied Alice, "I want no one; and you will never tell any one of this. I have had a great shock, Hester, and it has nearly killed me."

Hester of course presumed that it was Edward's death of which she spoke. "I can well imagine it," she returned.

"No, you cannot, child, any more than you can imagine death. But now I want to be alone; so please go home, and let this be as between us two. You behaved quietly, — I like that; and kiss me, dear."

Somewhat reluctantly Hester went away wondering, leaving Alice Westerley to the sad company of her own thoughts. Like Wendell, the woman he loved had also to face a future. As her physical control returned, she began to find it possible to think. She knew that by degrees she had gathered interest in Wendell, and that a part of it arose from her power to lift him out of his moods, and to sympathize with his theoretical ambitions. He had said that others had not that ability, and the attribution of exceptional capacity is a subtle flattery. Then he was gentle, sad, and with all his intellect, which Alice rated too highly, he had much of that strange dependence on women which

some much larger characters have exhibited. She knew that she had had full warning as to where the path she trod would lead, but each step was pleasant, and the steps unconsciously multiplied, until when Colonel Fox spoke return was impossible. Her lover had now done that thing which more than justified Colonel Fox and all that the malicious-minded had whispered.

A great writer has said that in all women's love there is a maternal element. It rose at times wildly in Alice's breast, making her yearn to help and protect Wendell, and for the moment utterly blinding her to the depth of infamy to which he had descended. This, indeed, was to her most strange. How could a learned, scholar-like man, of gentle ways and refined tastes, suddenly fall so far! She shuddered. There must have been events in his life of which she knew not, — horrible preparations for this final degradation. Then also there was something blundering and stupid about it all, — about his note, and his mode of acceptance, and his reference to Alice. And why did he not come to her, if he was in such sore straits? "And if he had, — oh, if he had," — she exclaimed aloud, "I should have married him; and then — and then — some day I should have come to know that he could do such things as this!"

And here it struck her that she was ingeniously torturing herself. "I must decide," she said.

In fact, from the instant that she read Wendell's note to Mrs. Morton she had made up her mind;

nay, all the habits and sentiments of a life of truth and purity and honor made it up for her. When seeming to hesitate she was only cheating love's sweet patience with the semblance of indecision.

How the next twenty-four hours were passed Alice Westerley could hardly have told a year or two later. Great moral catastrophes, like physical shocks, disturb or even obliterate in some minds the memory of the lesser events which follow them. It may be added that she was suffering less acutely. For the mind, as for the body, the tiger claws of calamity bring about for a time a certain amount of incapacity to feel further anguish, and leave us crushed, inert, and hopeless.

The day after her talk with Mrs. Morton, Alice sat alone, towards evening, in her drawing-room. Unsympathetic nature mocked her mood with the sun of a June day, and with full eyes she sat watching a pair of humming-birds as they darted through the swaying roses which hung about the window.

At this moment she heard a step on the gravel walk, and catching a glimpse of Wendell stepped back into the room as he rang the bell. Then, without a moment's hesitation, she went to the door of the room and waited until the servant appeared in the hall, when she said, —

"I am not at home to any one, — to any one."

She stood with one hand clutching at her heart, holding her breath for the moment, as she heard a voice but too well known, and then through the vines saw Wendell turn and go slowly down the

gravel path. She could see his side face, its pallor and the fineness of its lines. She gave way for the moment. Overcome by her emotions, and hardly knowing what she meant to do, she turned to a window which opened out on to the porch and gave access to the garden. It was closed, and fastened by a catch. The physical effort needed to move it steadied her, and when she succeeded in lifting the sash she paused irresolute, and remained standing by the window while Wendell walked slowly and hesitatingly away from her, down the little avenue of maples which led to the gate.

"And with that face!" she thought, as she moved away, "I don't know how it can be!" For the moment she had a wild desire to see Wendell, and to tell him that, love him as she might, marriage was out of the question; but she was wise enough to fear her own weakness, and to know that to say to his face what she must say would but add to the sum of her misery an incalculable torment.

The love she dreaded to torture face to face was as strong as her own, and the capacity for the nurture of an intense affection was large in Wendell, — of a half-womanly largeness, — and represented a life of absolute purity.

As he left her house he knew that his reception had been unusual. He had seen Mrs. Morton, who had been kind and thankful, and had so stated her gratitude as to make him feel that the money he had taken with apparent reluctance was in a measure earned; but no word had been said about Mrs.

Westerley. Mrs. Morton did not know what to say, or in fact whether she could wisely do anything but keep silent, and for the time her own grief was paramount. Then Wendell had walked up the main street, and been much questioned as to Edward's death by Mrs. Bullock and by Miss Sarah Grace, who was developing a promising faculty for the collection of facts about her neighbors. It had put the man in an ill humor, and he turned into the lane, contrasting with these petty natures the graciousness of his mistress, her multiple interests in life, and even her sympathy with those who followed pursuits that were incomprehensible to her. He had the happy poetical quality of dreaming himself out of situations, of ceasing to be himself for a time; and he walked along feeling as if now he were true and were moving in the sunshine of her truth, and as if her kiss had had the force of a benediction and had laid the demons of sin which once possessed him.

Then he was sent away from her door. That might have been an accident, but at present it was a new wretchedness. To see her banished all other thoughts, and to-day he had great need of her. He turned back, on a fresh impulse, and again rang.

"I must see Mrs. Westerley, if she is in the house," he declared.

"She is not at home, sir," repeated the servant, who knew his business.

"Give her my card," said Wendell, peremptorily. He had written on it "Please to see me."

John turned, rather dubious, and found his way through back premises into the drawing-room.

Alice shuddered. Fate had been too much for her. Should she put him off, and then write to him? But she hardly felt up to so stern a rôle of endurance. "Show Dr. Wendell in," she said. The servant closed the door behind him, and Wendell advanced with outstretched hand.

"At last, Alice!" he cried. "How I have longed for you! I have been so wretched."

There was something strange in her face, but he did not see it for a moment. She gave him her hand mechanically, and he drew her towards him. She had not yet spoken. Then he saw how grave and cold her face was, and that her eyes were red and the lids swollen.

"You cannot kiss me," she said. "Sit down."

"I cannot kiss you!" he repeated, slowly, and sat down with automatic obedience. "What have I done?" he faltered.

"Ask yourself," she rejoined, proudly. "I am not your conscience."

"I!" he said. "What is it? What does this mean? You know that what I did, I did for Arthur's sake! Did you disapprove of that? Oh, you could not! You did not! You must have understood what it cost me!"

"It was not that," she said. "You know me too well to suppose that I meant that. I have thought it over since, and I feel that what we did was wrong. Mrs. Morton had no right to ask or accept

it, and I was weak to yield to her. But I cannot talk of it any more. The thing is done, and there is now no help for it. But why, why," she said, looking down as she spoke, — "why did you accept a bribe from Mrs. Morton? You had done a thing I might call falsely noble, and you took money she gave you to make her feel surer of your silence! The two acts were so unlike. The one was heroic; the other — I — I can't understand it!"

She had meant to ask no explanation. Now in her pity she had done so; but it was love, not hope, that prompted her.

He sat looking at her downward face, while she questioned him with slow, distinct utterance, seeming at times to search for the right word.

"If you think it was wrong," he said, "it must have been wrong, but Edward had promised it, and I am perplexed with debts, and I had to have help. You cannot conceive what misery it is to owe money. I shall repay it."

"Repay!" she cried. "What you lost to get this help you can never get back! Can she give you again your honor? Can you cease to be an accomplice, — a paid accomplice? You have made it look like a crime. It does seem to me strange that you did not see this. I cannot dare to face the thought that, seeing it, you did as you have done."

He was silent. The darker guilt she did not guess was scourging him with intolerable anguish, as he saw himself in the clear light of her judgment. He dreaded to hear his sentence.

"What can I do," he asked, "to justify myself? I see that I was wrong. Help me to do what seems right to you."

His humility appeared to her disgusting. "And this," she said to herself, "this was the man I loved!"

"I will send it back," he added.

"That is for you to decide," she returned, looking at him.

"And you won't desert me, Alice?"

"If you mean by this that you can ever again be to me what you have been, you strangely misunderstand me. I could not marry a man I do not respect."

"Then it is all over."

"Yes, it is all over, — all but the shame and the bitterness of it. And I loved you! — oh, I loved you dearly; more than life, more than my soul! God help me, I would give it now, this instant, to be able to think of you as I once thought!"

She was scared when she looked at him. Down his face, ghastly and white, great drops of sweat rolled, and his mouth twitched convulsively. He was crushed by an agony of despair that seemed to him to make life unendurable. It was not alone the lost love that hurt him, but the fact that this woman regarded him with contempt, — she, so gentle and so full of sweet pity for all the forms of human trouble.

"And there is no hope for me?" he moaned, hoarsely.

"If I said there was, I should be false," she returned. "I meant to write to you, but you would insist on seeing me, and I have said more than I wanted to say. No doubt I have hurt you sorely, but you are not the only one hurt."

"And I must be to you of all men the lowest."

She made no answer, feeling that she was at the end of her powers of endurance. He stood up. "I cannot bear your scorn. I can bear the rest; that I cannot bear!"

Her silence tortured him beyond endurance. All else in life became little to him, — his name, his safety, his very existence.

He spoke, and with a singular calmness: "You are right; but I am now as one facing death. I had to do as I did, or resign all hopes of you. That I could not do."

"What?" she exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"I — made the mistake that cost Edward his life. I did it. I was in a hurry, as you know, to reach Ann in time, and in my haste I gave Arthur the wrong vial. It was I who killed him. It was to be either Arthur or I; and if I had said it was I, then I knew life was over for me. It was because I loved you, Alice."

"And is this really true?" she cried. "Oh, it cannot possibly be true! You could not have lied thus, and looked me in the face. Take it back. Please to say it is not so. And the money, — after that, to take her money!"

"Wrong or right," he said, "I did it for you."

"For me! For me! He says he did it for me! How little you knew me, — how less than little! If you had spoken the truth I should have clung to you for life. You cannot know how I should have loved you. Ah, I should have loved you as man was never loved."

"And now is it over, Alice?"

"Yes, it is over."

"Oh, my God!" he cried, "what have I done? But at least you cannot scorn me now. When you think of me you will say, 'He had the courage to do one right thing. He was not utterly base.'"

"I shall pray for you," she said, softly. "I shall try never to think of you except in my prayers;" and the tears rained through the hands with which she hid her face. "Go," she urged; "please to go. I can bear no more. Oh, my God — the shame of it! The shame of it!"

"I will go," he returned; but he fell on his knees beside her, and seizing her hand kissed it, one long, lingering kiss. Then he rose and slowly left the house.

Several days had gone by since the burial of Edward, when Captain Arthur Morton took his way, one afternoon, across the fields from his home towards the long highway of Germantown. He was on his usual visit to Hester, but was more sad than common, his morning having been spent in the legal business which necessarily followed his brother's death. Nothing in life had so sobered

him as this loss. He went along through the woods of June, thinking how remorselessly the busy waters of life had closed over this dear one, as the sea above its dead. It was in truth no common calamity. Edward's strong individuality intensified the sense of his loss to those he left; for although there are many people in the world, there are but few persons, and Edward's was a distinctive personality.

As the young soldier approached the house, he saw Hester in the garden beside it tying up the roses, which were now putting out anew their summer buds. She had dressed herself in black, and the vase-like curves of her young form came out sharply in the dark dress against the gray stone wall.

Arthur leapt lightly over the pale fence, and if the roses were of a sudden jealous they had reason therefor.

The two young folks strolled down the little garden, chatting as they went of many things: of the great war, out of which he had come with little scath; of the happy future they promised themselves, — and over and over returned to speak of the power to love which their brother and friend had possessed, of the sweetness that came out of his strength, until, looking up, each saw tears in the other's eyes, and owned their mysterious relief.

"And, Arty, no one loved him better than Dr. Wendell."

"I am sure of that. But was it not very strange

that he did not come to the funeral? I could not understand it."

"He was in bed all that day," returned Hester. "I never saw a person so altered. I think he must have been dreadfully shocked by Edward's death. I heard him tell Miss Ann once that he ought not to have been a doctor; and I think may be he is right, for Miss Ann says he broods for days when any of his patients die."

"And Ned did love him well," said Arthur. "I have a pleasant surprise for him, and I want you to come into the house with me and find him. It may do him good, poor fellow."

"And what is it, Arty?"

"That you cannot know until I tell Miss Ann. Come."

"I think he needs some help. He really must be ill. He scarcely speaks to any one. Miss Ann went out early to-day, and came back to tell me that she has arranged with Mrs. Westerley that I am to go to her, while Miss Ann takes the doctor to the seashore a while."

"Mother has a still better plan. She has written to ask Mr. Gray to let you go with her to Europe in August; and then next spring, if you are a good girl, I may follow you; and afterwards, in a year, Hester, — mother says in two, — you will consider the propriety and advantages of a residence in a mountain district; Alleghanies, we may say."

"Perhaps," said Hester, smiling. "How kind your mother is!"

"Mother is never half anything," he returned. "She fought us a good while, and now she is making believe that she has won a victory. We need n't contradict her. I never contradict people who agree with me."

"I shall know how to escape contradiction," cried Hester, laughing. "But there is Miss Ann at the window;" and as she spoke they passed through the hall into the sitting-room.

"Good news, Miss Ann," cried Arthur. "I wanted to be first to tell you that my dear Ned has left your brother ten thousand dollars." He had in reality left a letter asking Arthur to give it, as he had only a life estate in his property, which passed to Arthur.

"It was like him," she returned; "and I may say to you that it will be a great relief. God has been good to us, and there is no one I would like better to think of as helping us than your brother. But here is Ezra. Please don't remark his appearance. He has been very wretched, and he does not like to have it mentioned."

Arthur was struck with the man's face. It was haggard and flushed.

"Tell him about it," continued Ann; "you will like to, I am sure."

"What is it? Tell me what?" returned Wendell, in an uninterested voice.

"Only some pleasant news," Arthur responded. "I came over to say that by a provision of Edward's will you are to have ten thousand dollars.

And we are all so glad, — Hester, and I, and all of us."

"*He* has left *me* ten thousand dollars!"

Arthur was troubled. "Yes; is n't it nice? We all owe you so much that I should like to have given it myself; only you might not like to take from the living what you can take from the dead. But it is as if dear Ned were thanking you for us all. That is why we like it."

Wendell looked up at the speaker with a face written all over with the toneless, infirm lines of weariness. Then he said, in a monotonous voice, as if he did not feel the meaning of his own words, —

"The dead thankful! the dead thankful! I can't take it, — that 's all. I can't take it. Let me lie down."

Arthur looked his amazement. "Doctor, doctor," he said, "you are ill. It has been too much for you. Why do you talk so?"

"No, I am not sick; I am dead. But hell is alive. Go away, all of you. I want to be alone."

"Yes," said Ann, "go away. Leave him to me. He will be all right in a few days. This last week has been too much for him." She knew that he had taken a good deal of opium, and, thinking his strangeness of conduct due to this, dreaded lest he should further betray himself.

Somewhat reluctantly they left her. Then Wendell spoke: "We must get away, Ann. We must go somewhere. And don't mind what I say. Tell Arthur I don't mean anything. Tell him I took

some morphia this morning; and don't look at me that way, Ann."

"Yes, brother," she replied uneasily; "yes, you want a change. Don't worry, dear. I will arrange it."

It was all one horrible mystery to her, — this last week; but she got her brother to bed, and went on at once completing her arrangements for leaving town for a week or two, hoping that with change of air he would become as he had been.

Within a day or two they left abruptly, without leave-taking; and the house was closed, and Hester went to Alice Westerley's.

Alice found it impossible to talk of what Wendell had told her. Some day she must do it. Just now she could not make up her mind to blacken further the character of the man she had loved; but being a just woman, she wrote to Helen Morton: —

"I have done you a wrong, and while I have in no respect changed my views as to what should have been our course, I want to ask your pardon. I have kept away on the plea of ill health. If you can forget what I said in haste, I will come over to-morrow and see you, but let us say nothing of the past."

Helen Morton was too much softened by the sorrow of the week to give any but a kindly answer, and they were friends again, but always with a sense of some vague barrier between them. We may be eager enough to let the dead past bury its dead passions, but at times their ghosts move sadly

in the dreary graveyard of memory. Some day the good priest Time shall lay them.

Late in August Mrs. Morton, Hester, and Alice went abroad; and meanwhile there came no news of Wendell. In September, Ann returned. There was a sudden sale of their furniture, and she went as she had come, still ruddy-cheeked and quiet, and betraying no sign of any suffering these months may have laid upon her.

XXIV.

A YEAR and more had gone by since the actors in this story passed, one by one, from the quiet village, which now makes a part of the great city. There was a dinner, one of those debtor-and-creditor feasts which wise men dread, at which was assembled a somewhat incongruous collection of guests.

Mr. Wilmington found, to his horror, that he was assigned to Mrs. Grace, and was not sorry to see, as he sat down, that the seat on his left was occupied by Miss Clemson, who came in to dinner on the arm of Dr. Jones, a more than middle-aged man, much known as reliable; a comfortable physician, too well satisfied with his art, "and so sympathetic, my dear."

Mrs. Grace spoke to him across her neighbors as soon as the soup was removed. "Whatever has become of Dr. Wendell?" she asked.

"I do not know," he returned. "He was always a rolling stone, I am told. And he was a rolling stone in his opinions, too. Never could hold fast to anything."

"He was very strong on gout," said Wilmington; "had some ideas about it I never heard before."

"I dare say," rejoined Dr. Jones.

"The doctors are like dentists," murmured Miss Clemson to Wilmington. "How they hate one another; and after all people get well. It is merely a question of statistics."

"May be Dr. Lagrange knows," said Mrs. Grace, who pursued a personal fact as a naturalist does a butterfly. Lagrange was within ear-shot across the table. "We were talking of Dr. Wendell," she added. "Do you know where he has gone? I always did think he went away quite mysteriously."

"He is in the West, I believe," replied Lagrange; "but why he left I do not know."

"There was always something queer about him," affirmed Mrs. Grace. "I should think a doctor that did n't believe in liver, or malaria, or even in neuralgia, would n't come to much good."

"That is conclusive," said Miss Clemson. "I always liked him."

"And did n't you think he would marry Alice Westerley?" returned Mrs. Grace. "I think he will yet."

"It is hardly a subject for thought," said Miss Clemson, severely; "but it may interest you to know that Mrs. Westerley is still abroad, and has so far married no one."

"I did think there was a chance for Colonel Fox."

"Might do worse," growled Wilmington.

"A year is surely long enough to mourn a lost

lover," returned Miss Clemson; and then she whispered an aside to Wilmington: "Alas, poor Sarah! You should avail yourself of the opportunity."

"I am not old enough to manage so much real estate," said Wilmington, ferociously. "But do you know," he added, aloud, "that we expect Arty and his wife next week?"

"Oh, that is too bad!" exclaimed Mrs. Grace. "I never heard it."

She began to feel that the world of fact was evading her pursuit in some maliciously mysterious way.

"You seem skeptical," said Miss Clemson; "we shall have you dubious as to the census next, Mrs. Grace."

"Well, I have my opinions," returned that lady. "And as to Dr. Wendell, you can say what you like; I never approved of him, and I am not surprised at the result."

"You should have been a doctor yourself," remarked Lagrange, who said vicious things with a bewildering tranquillity of manner; "you are such a good observer thrown away."

Mrs. Grace had her doubts as to this compliment.

"And," added Miss Clemson, "it would be so nice to be able to ask people their ages."

"But they would n't ever tell you the truth," rejoined Mrs. Grace, thoughtfully.

"It is the absence of truth that makes social life possible," said Miss Clemson.

"And women agreeable!" cried Wilmington. "What a horrible sherry!"

"Poor thing!" cried Miss Clemson. "Let us talk wine a little."

"It is better than gossip," said Wilmington, sharply.

"I agree with you; but gossip is socially valuable, because it requires no intelligence. Even the weather is lost to us now, since we have the signal service. All the pleasures of doubt are being taken away from us. I like it myself, and if I live long enough life will become sufficiently definite to be agreeable."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Wilmington, "I wish you would say all that over again to Mrs. Grace."

"Thank you, I never talk to her if I can help it. It makes me feel as if I were looking at life through a bad window glass. Alice Westerley was right about her when she said the real *chiffonnière* would be nicer society. Mrs. Grace does like the pursuit of ragged facts."

"Oh, our dear Mrs. Westerley! I wish she would come home and abuse me a little. Seriously speaking, I had myself some idea that she might marry Dr. Wendell. I liked the man, on the whole, a good deal better than I like most Yankees."

"I do not share your prejudices," returned Miss Clemson. "He was charmingly intelligent. What has become of him?"

"Well, you know his health broke down, and I

believe Fox found him quite ill and penniless at Long Branch, where his sister had taken him. I understand that Fox carried them off to the West, and has given him a fresh start."

"It was like Mr. Fox," said Miss Clemson. "I shall write Alice Westerley all about it this very evening. She will be so interested."

Wilmington smiled.

"What is amusing you?" she asked.

"Oh, I was thinking," he replied.

Some two months after this dinner, which has let us into a knowledge of the fates of some of our friends, Mrs. Morton received from Ann Wendell this letter: —

DEAR MRS. MORTON, — I have been able to persuade my brother that it were well in the eyes of God that he permit me to write to you, and say that the death of your son Edward was owing to negligence on the part of my brother, who was in haste, for some cause unknown to me, and so gave the wrong vial to Arthur, and did not sufficiently examine as he should have done. For reasons which I do not understand, my brother allowed the blame to rest on Arthur, and seemed to be willing to assist in concealing the truth. Now, at last, having come to look at it more wisely, he is desirous that I should tell you the truth; and hence you will see why he could not take the money which would not have come to him except for the death he caused.

Perhaps, now that some time has gone by, you will try to forgive this great wickedness, knowing that my brother is much broken in health and spirit.

When Alice saw this note, a good while after it was written, she had a great longing to be able to say some tender words to the true, simple, honest woman, who had poured out the waters of her loving life where the barren soil seemed to give back no least return.